

The Masterpiece Library
of
Short Stories

SET IN 20 VOLUMES

IV

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The Masterpiece Library of Short stories

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The French Story-Tellers

From George Sand to Émile Zola

FROM George Sand to Émile Zola, the modern short story was written by the French with perfect art. It is true that Maupassant and other later writers had something of importance to contribute ; but the moulds into which they cast their materials were fashioned by their predecessors. In fact, the most brilliant of the later men were professed disciples of the writers of the period at which we have now arrived. These writers were widely different in outlook, style, and subject-matter. Some of them were wildly and fantastically romantic ; others were violently and harshly realistic. But they all knew how to write a *conte*, and how to bring out the special qualities of this new fine flower of literature. Much of the credit for the extraordinary success of the modern French short story is due to the good taste of the French newspaper public. They required in their journals a finer literary quality than was found in the daily newspapers of other countries. The mere collection of news did not interest them ; they wanted to be moved, entertained, and charmed, rather than to be instructed. The more popular prints relied on the serial novel as their principal attraction ; the more distinguished journals found in the short story an artistic and satisfying literary side-dish. Provided the short story of the day was good, the leading article brilliant, and the chronicle of town gossip piquant and witty, it did not matter about the news.

In these favouring circumstances, the contemporaries of Mérimée proceeded to develop the brief prose tale with amazing fecundity and skill. In America, about the same time, Poe had also worked out in an original way both the practice and theory of the new literary form ; but the American people did not then fully appreciate the worth of Poe's wonderful creations. So it was left almost entirely to French writers to elaborate the qualities and define the scope of the new kind of fiction. Thus it is that the art

George
Sand

of the modern short story became a French art. Even George Sand, that wild woman writer of genius who turned her love-affairs into novels in which there was more vehemence of spirit than lasting literary quality, could write a short story like her "Marquise" with an instinctive feeling for the true form of the *conte*. She does not explain and analyse the character of the old noblewoman who fell in love with an actor; she merely suggests the strange depths of passion in the cold, cynical, aged beauty. She leaves the imagination of the reader vibrating of its own power to the hints she gives. There is seen the art of the short story!

JULES JANIN, one of the admiring critics who helped George Sand to win fame, was the glory of the *Journal des Débats*—one of the greatest French newspapers. Janin was one of those wizards of the pen who could do anything; according to Thackeray, he translated Sterne and other English novelists without troubling to learn a word of English! He was brilliance incarnate, and he wrote as he talked, in an improvisation of wit and whimsy and extravagant good sense. He was a born actor who gesticulated on paper instead of on the stage: one of the princes of Bohemia, in the days when the Quartier Latin was what it now merely pretends to be. His tale of "The Vendean Marriage," with its telling situations and picturesque colouring, is an admirable example of his broad, free, dashing style.

Émile Souvestre was another newspaper writer with a fine talent for literature. As he saw it, "the journalist continues, in a new form and for other purposes, the work of the wandering minstrels of the Middle Ages! It is from him that the people ask exciting stories to delight their hours of leisure. The briefness of these hours makes it necessary that the tales shall be short; for they are usually read at the family gathering in the evening, and everybody likes to break up at bedtime with a complete impression, which can only be given by a short story." Souvestre was a Breton who had a long struggle in Paris before he won fame by his *Philosopher under the Roof*, from which we have taken the touching, quiet sketch of "Uncle Maurice." He was a man who tried to find in the study of the lives of the humble, in their simple pleasures and deep sorrows, the truth of feeling and sense of religion that he missed in the fashionable society of his age. His studies of Breton ways and customs made his picturesque native land famous throughout the world.

A STRANGE tenderness and love of simplicity can also be traced in the work of Alfred de Musset, who was really a most complex creature. He tells the story of his own life in "The White Blackbird"—one of the most delightful allegories in any literature. The unusual kind of bird represents genius, and especially the genius of the author. The common blackbird hen who makes herself seem white by means of paste and flour is probably George Sand, with whom Musset lived for a little while at Venice. They were two egoists who did not get on well together;

but Musset was finely sincere amid his extravagances of manner. If Hugo is the eagle of modern French lyrical poetry, Musset is the nightingale, and his prose is almost as good as his verse. The charming little story of "Camille" has a sweetness about it which shows that Musset—who died in his prime from absinthe drinking—was a fine fellow at heart.

Théophile Gautier—who found his inspiration in an underdone steak—pretended to be the wildest of the Romantic school. But romance was only a matter of clothes with him—his famous scarlet waistcoat is the only romantic thing about him. He was a healthy, imperturbable man who lived with his eyes. His imagination was entirely visual: he never allowed his feelings to colour his art. But what a magnificent painter in words he was! He had only one beloved book—the dictionary, and he continually dredged it for strange terms and novel epithets. He is the pure artist in French literature, and the inventor of the phrase, "art for art's sake." In "The Mummy's Foot" and "The Pavilion on the Lake" his glittering descriptive power and his exquisite care for form are finely displayed. The translation of the first tale is by Lafcadio Hearn, who learnt much of his art from Gautier. In "The Nest of Nightingales" the fantastic quality has a softer charm.

Théophile
Gautier

IN the work of Octave Feuillet the force of the romantic movement has weakened. He began with graceful essays in sentimentality, written, however, in a masterly diction. Then he got more life and reality into his studies of fashionable society, of which his "Circe" is a happy illustration. It is one of the first examples of the new dialogue form of stories, in which a dramatic structure is used purely for the purpose of narration. He was the favourite novelist of the Second Empire, but it was after the disasters of the war with Prussia that Feuillet rose to the full height of his power, and drew the admiration of so fastidious a critic as Walter Pater. His brief sketch of "Saving the Flag" is one of the finest things of its kind. It is a masterpiece of quiet intensity.

Octave
Feuillet

Constant Guérault is a writer of a lower order. He began at the age of thirty as a novelist of the sensational school, but he had some flashes of inspiration, and in one of these he wrote his remarkable study of the mind of a murderer, "After the Crime." Léo Lespès was a man of the same school. He was one of the founders of the *Petit Journal*, which gained its great circulation largely owing to his contributions. His brilliant little stories, of which "The Mirror" is a charming example, were the delight of a large public, but he is now scarcely known outside his own country. His picture of the lovely blind girl who finds a mirror in her sweetheart is a touching essay in sentiment.

Constant
Guérault

Léo Lespès

THE next writer, Champfleury, would have nothing to do with sentiment. He wanted to develop the sombre side of Balzac's view of modern society, and become the first novelist of the purely realistic school. This, in point of date, he is: but in regard to literary

merit he has been so completely eclipsed by Flaubert, Zola and Maupassant that his longer tales are quite forgotten. He lives now by a few short stories that he wrote for mere amusement : for in them he displays a genuine gift of humorous observation which is worth more than his strained attempts at realism. His " Great Find of Monsieur Bretoncel " is a little classic of humour ; and the briefer " Monsieur Tringle " is quite as sensibly funny.

Champ-
fleury

Champfleury is followed by the man who smothered his serious work—Gustave Flaubert. Flaubert is the supreme writer of the realistic school. He anticipated and excelled Zola in the rigorous study of the darker facts of life : he formed and shaped the genius of his young friend, Maupassant : and his influence can be traced in the best work of Tolstoi and other foreign novelists. A big, fair-haired Norman, consumed with a passion for the finest effects in literary art, Flaubert united in himself all the chief lines of activity in modern French literature. Pure romance attracted him as much as the realistic study of life did. He was above all things an artist, ready to model in the clay of realism, or the marble of classicism, or the golden bronze of romance. Were it not for their great length, all his three famous novelettes would be included in our collection ; but as they exceed the limits of the true short story, we have been compelled to choose only one of them—the picturesque, romantic evocation of mediaeval life and thought, " St. Julian the Hospitaller."

Gustave
Flaubert

WITH the work of Charles Baudelaire, the influence of Poe, the only great short-story writer outside France, began to tell on the French mind. Baudelaire was inspired both by Poe and De Quincey, but at the same time he retained a fine strange originality of his own, and exercised in turn a considerable influence on Swinburne and later English writers. He was a bundle of raw nerves with a ferocious contempt for modern civilisation, and he became one of the chief spirits of anarchism in modern literature. His two short stories, " An Heroic Death " and " The Cord," are studies in that new kind of cruel, cold-blooded irony which led Victor Hugo to say that Baudelaire had invented a new kind of shudder. Baudelaire was really a pessimist, amusing himself at the expense of humanity, but as an artist he was admirable alike in poetry and prose.

Baudelaire

Baudelaire, however, was not representative of the spirit of his age. Never were the French more gay and light-hearted than in the middle of the nineteenth century, when their country had recovered from the exhaustion of the Napoleonic era. It was agitated with new movements in art and literature and politics, and the young men in the Quartier Latin in Paris were brimming over with zest for life and love of art. Henri Mürger, the son of a Paris hall-porter of a house inhabited by famous writers, painters, and singers, entered the world of literature with the help of some of his father's tenants. Passing his life in the happy-go-lucky Bohemian society of the capital, Mürger swiftly rose to fame at the age of twenty-six, by his brilliant picture of this society—his *Vie de Bohème*, from which

Henri
Mürger

we have taken two short stories, "Francine's Muff" and "The Passage of the Red Sea." The first shows the pathos of life in Bohemian Paris: the second its gaiety, sparkle, and glitter. "It is a delightful life," said Mürger, "but a terrible one."

In Auguste Vitu's "Second Violin" we have an excellent example of the little, well-turned romances, by means of which the inhabitants of Bohemia managed, now and then, to earn a little money. The art with which it is written is not a personal quality; by this time every Frenchman with any bent to literature could write a short story with an instinct for this new literary form. The short story was no longer a delightful experiment; it was a tradition. Every writer tried his hand at it. Serious historians, like Renan and Taine, were almost as good at it as was a professional short-story writer like Théodore de Banville. Banville wrote some hundreds of brilliant *contes*, and there is such an equality of craftsmanship about all his work that it is difficult to decide which to select. In his prose as in his verse, Banville was the accomplished artist, more interested in technique than in life. Had he only felt more deeply, he might have rivalled the greatest of his contemporaries, for he had an amazing control of his instrument. His "Transposition" is an effective study of the superstition of the transmigration of souls, and his "First Love" is a striking piece of work, with a depth of thought in it unusual in Banville, while his tale of "The Cab" shows how finely ironical he could be. A good many French short-story writers of the present day owe to Banville more than they care to confess. His numerous volumes of half-forgotten short stories have been a mine of inspiration to other writers.

SO great was the vogue of the short story that even the most brilliant playwright of the period, Alexandre Dumas the younger—son of the creator of the *Three Musketeers*—was compelled to see what he could do in the new art of fiction. His "Hanging at La Piroche" is not only a remarkably fine tale, but it is a lesson in the kind of writing required in the short story. The younger Dumas was always a lay preacher; he invented the problem play that Ibsen perfected, and, like Mr. Bernard Shaw, he generally wrote a preface to each of his plays, in which he discussed some literary or social doctrine. The discussion with which he begins his story contains some sound literary advice, and the story itself has an unusual and surprising plot that is handled with quiet and assured mastery. Dumas was too good a playwright to use a dramatic construction in the short story. He gets his effect by a more subtle and leisurely style of narration.

Émile Erckmann and Alexandre Chatrian, two Alsatian friends who wrote together under their hyphenated names, are among the best short-story writers in France. They wrote together for thirty years, composing stories, legends, and plays about their native country, with a fine strong personal feeling that made their work read like the production of a single mind. One of their plays,

The Polish Jew, known in English as *The Bells*, gave Sir Henry Irving his weirdest and most powerful part ; but it is by two or three of their novels and half a dozen of their short stories that Erckmann-Chatrian have won a high place in literature. Their fantastic ghost story, "My Inheritance," is as full of thought as it is of picturesqueness and humour. "Uncle Bernard's Shell" is a tender, charming tale of home life in the Alsatian mountains. Then in "The Papers of Madame Jeannette" we have one of the best tales of the French Revolution ever written, while "The Inventor" anticipates the weirdly scientific stories of Mr. H. G. Wells.

IF Edmond About had kept his short stories within the limits in which Erckmann-Chatrian worked, he would be more largely represented in this volume. For About is equal to Mérimée as a writer of tales. He is one of the wittiest of Frenchmen and a keen observer of manners and characters. Most of his works, however, are something between a novel and a short story ; they are in fact novelettes ; but his admirable genius is well displayed in his entertaining story, "Which was the Madman?" with its surprising and dramatic revolution in the situation of the two men.

Edmond About
Gustave Droz is another French writer of high reputation, from whom we have chosen only one short tale, "The Sempstress's Story." Droz, however, is rather monotonous in subject matter. He was in love with babies, and in middle age he turned from art to literature in order to write about them in a series of tales that won a remarkable popularity.

André Theuriet is a fine novelist with a wider range. In his long novels he depicts French peasant life in fresh, limpid, delicate colours, in which his passion for the countryside is admirably expressed. But, as his "Sentimental Journey" shows, he is also keenly interested in the feelings of men and women, and there is a curious tone of irony in the conclusion to this idyll of railway travel. In "La Bretonne" he touches one of the sombre depths of life in a country town. With all his delicacy and love of beauty Theuriet did not turn away from the darker facts of life ; he tried to interpret them.

Ludovic Halévy never tried to interpret anything. Son of the famous Jewish composer, Élie Halévy, Ludovic enjoyed life to the full under the Second Empire, and wrote the librettos to Offenbach's gaily brilliant burlesques. Halévy was a fine light wit, with a scholarly style that won him a seat in the French Academy. "The Grand Marriage" is a work of his old age, written with the verve of youth, and his "Dream" is one of the most audacious pictures of life beyond the grave that has been composed. It is worthy of Voltaire, who was probably also a Frenchman of Jewish origin.

Émile Gaboriau is better known as a weaver of detective romances than as a short-story writer. The tragic title of his tale of "The Accursed House" is, however, a joke on the reader. For the story is

a delightful and entertaining satire on the owners of Paris tenements, with their inconvenient habit of raising the rents of their flats. The veritable master of the story of mystery and terror is Count Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, the descendant of one of the most ancient noble families in Europe, who died in poverty in a Paris hospital in 1889. Villiers is equal to Poe, and his style is better than the American's. His "Torture by Hope" is taken from his *Cruel Tales*, which is one of the classics of the modern French short story.

Gaboriau

Villiers de
l'Isle-Adam

Ernest Daudet is somewhat overshadowed by the fame of his younger brother, and most of his life has been spent in historical studies. But in his earlier short stories, such as "The Vengeance of the Admiral," he displays a power of invention as remarkable as that of the younger Daudet, though he lacks the grace and flexibility of style of Alphonse Daudet. Of Armand Silvestre there is little to be said, in spite of the beauty and power of his tale of "The Storm." Silvestre was a young man of genius—poet as well as prose writer—who tumbled into the mud of Paris and wallowed there. His early work is full of life and charm and loveliness. He might have been one of the glories of French literature, but became one of its shames. The work he might have done was carried out by Alphonse Daudet, the most delightful writer of short stories in the world. There have been men more powerful in genius than he, but none with equal exquisiteness, subtlety, and flower-like perfection. The trouble with Daudet is not to find his best stories, but to discover some grounds for omitting a large number of them. For there might be at least fifty of his *contes* that deserve to be included in any collection of "the thousand best" short stories. The selection made by the Editorial Board for the present work was one of its many difficulties, but it would certainly be impossible to bring together in the space here given to Daudet a better or more representative set of his stories.

Ernest
Daudet

Armand
Silvestre

ALPHONSE DAUDET can make a story out of nothing. How slight is the foundation of "The Pope's Mule"! Just an old country saying, going back to the times when the Popes had removed from Rome to Avignon. Yet what a work of art he makes of it! "The Goat of Monsieur Seguin" is another delicious omelette of literature, in which the lightness and grace of the maker's hand count for everything. "Old Folks" is a touching example of Daudet's pathos, where he smiles through his tears. The sight of two taverns standing opposite in a hamlet in Provence, one bright and bustling with business, the other decayed and silent, inspires him with the wonderful little drama of "The Two Inns." Then in "The Elixir of Father Gaucher" we have a little jewel of humour—real humour, not French wit. Quite as good in the same way is Daudet's story of his own childhood, "The Pope is Dead." Many of these tales were composed in an old mill in Provence, from which Daudet used to send a weekly sketch to Paris. Collected to-

Alphonse
Daudet

gether under the title of *Letters from my Mill!* these sketches were at once recognised as a work of immortal beauty. In the opinion of many good judges, these early stories of Daudet's native province are superior in worth to the long novels he wrote when he settled in Paris.

His short stories of Paris life, however, are as good in their way as his sketches of Provence. Most of them turn on the Siege of Paris and the subsequent outbreak of the Commune. "The Little Pies" is a delicious comedy in a tragic setting. "The Siege of Berlin" is a strange, touching sketch of the end of one of the soldiers of the great Napoleon. "The Boy Spy" is one of the smallest and greatest of Daudet's works: and "Belisaire's Prussian" is a horrible savage thing, in which Daudet's own anger against the Germans is expressed. But in the quiet, moving sketch entitled "Mothers" his fine power of sympathy revives, and in the famous "Last Lesson"—the greatest of all his stories, long or short—his intense patriotism is conveyed with incomparable art, and a telling reticence of emotion. In the apparently artless words of a child the deep despair that Frenchmen felt in 1871 is brought out with such power that we forget that the thing is literature. It seems life itself. There is more conscious art in the two lovely poems in prose, "The Death of the Dauphin" and "The Magistrate in the Fields." But they are pearls of literary art. "At the Palais de Justice" is a love story of an unusual kind, and "The Beneficent God of Chemille" is such a mixture of loveliness, humour, and seriousness, that only the inimitable Daudet could have written it.

IT is strange to find Émile Zola, the most brutal of the realists, writing stories comparable with those Daudet wrote in happy mood from his mill. "The Shoulders of the Marquise," "The Paradise of Cats," and "The Legend of Little Blue Riding-Hood" are quite unlike Zola's more famous novels. They were written in 1874, about five years after the appearance of Daudet's tales, when Zola was still uncertain of his way and undecided in aim. But if only for their unusual delicacy and lightness and grace they deserve to be remembered.

E. W.

GEORGE SAND
1804-1876

THE MARQUISE

THE Marquise de R—— never said brilliant things, although it is the fashion in French fiction to make every old woman sparkle with wit. Her ignorance was extreme in all matters which contact with the world had not taught her, and she had none of that nicety of expression, that exquisite penetration, that marvellous tact, which belong, it is said, to women who have seen all the different phases of life and society; she was blunt, heedless, and sometimes very cynical. She put to flight every idea I have formed concerning the noble ladies of the olden times, yet she was a genuine Marquise and had seen the Court of Louis XV. But as she was an exceptional character, do not seek in her history for a study of the manners of any epoch.

I found much pleasure in the society of the lady. She seemed to me remarkable for nothing much except her prodigious memory for the events of her youth and the masculine lucidity with which she expressed her reminiscences. For the rest, she was, like all aged persons, forgetful of recent events and indifferent to everything in which she had any present personal concern.

Her beauty had not been of that piquant order which, though lacking in splendour and regularity, still gives pleasure in itself; she was not one of those women taught to be witty, in order to make as favourable an impression as those who are so by nature. The Marquise undoubtedly had had the misfortune to be beautiful. I have seen her portrait, for, like all old women, she was vain enough to hang it up for inspection in her apartments. She was represented in the character of a huntress nymph, with a low satin waist painted to imitate tiger-skin, sleeves of antique lace, bow of sandal-wood, and a crescent of pearl lighting up her hair.

It was an admirable painting, and, above all, an admirable woman—tall, slender, dark, with black eyes, austere and noble features, unsmiling, deep red lips, and hands which, it was said, had thrown the Princess de Lamballe into despair. Without lace, satin or powder,

she might indeed have seemed one of those beautiful, proud nymphs fabled to appear to mortals in the depths of the forest or upon the solitary mountain-sides, only to drive them mad with passion and regret.

Yet the Marquise had made few acquaintances ; according to her own account she had been thought dull and frivolous. The roués of that time cared less for the charms of beauty than for the allurements of coquetry ; women infinitely less admired than she had robbed her of all her adorers, and, strange enough, she had seemed indifferent to her fate. The little she told me of her life made me believe that her heart had had no youth, and that a cold selfishness had paralysed all its faculties. Still, her old age was adorned by several sincere friends, and she gave alms without ostentation.

One evening I found her even more communicative than usual ; there was much of sadness in her voice.

" My child," she said, " the Vicomte de Larrieux has just died of the gout. It is a great sorrow to me, for I have been his friend these sixty years."

" What was his age ? " I asked.

" Eighty-four. I am eighty, but not so infirm as he was, and I can hope to live longer. *N'importe!* Several of my friends have gone this year, and although I tell myself that I am younger and stronger than any of them, I cannot help being frightened when I see my contemporaries dropping off around me."

" And these," said I, " are the only regrets you feel for poor Larrieux, a man who worshipped you for sixty years, who never ceased to complain of your cruelty, yet never revolted from his allegiance ? He was a model lover : there are no more such men."

" My dear child," answered the Marquise, " I see that you think me cold and heartless. Perhaps you are right ; judge for yourself. I will tell you my whole history, and, whatever opinion you may have of me, I shall, at least, not die without having made myself known to some one.

" When I was sixteen I left St. Cyr, where I had been educated, to marry the Marquis de R——. He was fifty, but I dared not complain, for every one congratulated me on this splendid match, and all my portionless companions envied my lot.

" I was never very bright, and at that time I was positively stupid ; the education of the cloister had completely benumbed my faculties.

I left the convent with a romantic idea of life and of the world, stupidly considered a merit in young girls, but which often results in the misery of their whole lives. As a natural consequence, the experience brought me by my brief married life was lodged in so narrow a mind that it was of no use to me. I learned, not to understand life, but to doubt myself.

“ I was a widow before I was seventeen, and as soon as I was out of mourning I was surrounded by suitors. I was then in all the splendour of my beauty, and it was generally admitted that there was neither face nor figure that could compare with mine ; but my husband, an old, worn-out, dissipated man, who had never shown me anything but irony and disdain, and had married me only to secure an office promised with my hand, had left me such an aversion to marriage that I could never be brought to contract new ties. In my ignorance of life I fancied that all men resembled him, and that in a second husband I should find M. de R——’s hard heart, his pitiless irony, and that insulting coldness which had so deeply humiliated me.

“ This terrible entrance into life had dispelled for me all the illusions of youth. My heart, which perhaps was not entirely cold, withdrew into itself and grew suspicious. I was foolish enough to tell my real feelings to several women of my acquaintance. They did not fail to tell what they had learned, and without considering the doubts and anguish of my heart, boldly declared that I despised all men. There is nothing men will resent more readily than this ; my lovers soon learned to despise me, and continued their flatteries only in the hope of finding an opportunity to hold me up to ridicule. I saw mockery and treachery written upon every forehead, and my misanthropy increased every day. About this time there came to Paris from the Provinces a man who had neither talent strength, nor fascination, but who possessed a frankness and uprightness of feeling very rare among the people with whom I lived. This was the Vicomte de Larrieux. He was soon acknowledged to be my most favoured lover.

“ He, poor fellow, loved me sincerely in his soul. His soul ! Had he a soul ? He was one of those hard, prosaic men who have not even the elegance of vice or the glitter of falsehood. He was struck only by my beauty ; he took no pains to discover my heart.

“ This was not disdain on his part, it was incapacity. Had he found in me the power of loving, he would not have known how to

respond to it. I do not think there ever lived a man more wedded to material things than poor Larrieux. He ate with delight, and fell asleep in all the arm-chairs ; the remainder of the time he took snuff. He was always occupied in satisfying some appetite. I do not think he had one idea a day.

"And yet, my dear friend, will you believe it ? I never had the energy to get rid of him ; for sixty years he was my torment. Constantly offended by my repulses, yet constantly drawn to me by the very obstacles I placed in the way of his passion, he had for me the most faithful, the most undying, the most wearisome love that ever man felt for woman."

"I am surprised," said I, "that in the course of your life you never met a man capable of understanding you, and worthy of converting you to real love. Must we conclude that the men of to-day are superior to those of other times ?"

"That would be a great piece of vanity on your part," she answered, smiling. "I have little reason to speak well of the men of my own time ; yet I doubt, too, whether you have made much progress ; but I will not moralise. The cause of my misfortune was entirely within myself. I had no tact, no judgment. A woman as proud as I was should have possessed a superior character, and should have been able to distinguish at a glance many of the insipid, false, insignificant men who surrounded me. I was too ignorant, too narrow-minded for this. As I lived on I acquired more judgment and have learned that several of the objects of my hatred deserved far other feelings."

"And while you were young," I rejoined, "were you never tempted to make a second trial ? Was this deep-rooted aversion never shaken off ? It is strange."

The Marquise was silent, then hastily laying her gold snuff-box on the table—"I have begun my confession," said she, "and I will acknowledge everything. Listen. Once, and only once, I have loved, with a love as passionate and indomitable as it was imaginative and ideal. For you see, my child, you young men think you understand women, but you know nothing about them. If many old women of eighty were occasionally to tell you the history of their loves, you would perhaps find that the feminine soul contains sources of good and evil of which you have no idea. And now, guess what was the rank of the man for whom I entirely lost my head—I, a Marquise, and prouder and haughtier than any other."

"The King of France, or the Dauphin, Louis XIV."

"Oh, if you go on in that manner, it will be three hours before you come to my lover. I prefer to tell you at once—he was an actor."

"A king, notwithstanding, I imagine."

"The noblest, the most elegant that ever trod the boards. You are not amazed?"

"Not much. I have heard that such ill-sorted passions were not rare, even when the prejudices of caste in France were more powerful than they are to-day."

"Those ill-sorted passions were not tolerated by the world, I can assure you. The first time I saw him I expressed my admiration to the Comtesse de Ferrières, who happened to be beside me, and she answered: 'Do not speak so warmly to any one but me. You would be cruelly taunted were you suspected of forgetting that in the eyes of a woman of rank an actor can never be a man.'

"Madame Ferrières' words remained in my mind, I know not why. At the time this contemptuous tone of hers seemed to me absurd, and this fear of committing myself a piece of malicious hypocrisy.

"His name was Lelio; he was by birth an Italian, but spoke French admirably. He may have been thirty-five, although on the stage he often seemed less than twenty. He played Corneille; after this he played Racine, and in both he was admirable."

"I am surprised," said I, interrupting the Marquise, "that his name does not appear in the annals of dramatic talent."

"He was never famous," she answered, "and was appreciated neither by the court nor the town. I have heard that he was outrageously hissed when he first appeared. Afterward he was valued for his feeling, his fire, and his efforts at correct elocution. He was tolerated and sometimes applauded, but, on the whole, he was always considered an actor without taste.

"In those days tragedy was played 'properly'; it was necessary to die with taste, to fall gracefully, and to have an air of good breeding, even in the case of a blow. Dramatic art was modelled upon the usage of good society, and the diction and gestures of the actors were in harmony with the hoops and hair powder, which even then disfigured *Phèdre*.¹ I have never appreciated the defects of this school of art. I bravely endured it twice in the week, for it was the fashion to like it;

¹ *Phèdre*, a Tragedy by Racine.

but I listened with so cold and constrained an air that it was generally said I was insensible to the charms of fine poetry.

“ One evening, after a rather long absence from Paris, I went to the Comédie Française to see *Le Cid*.¹ Lelio had been admitted to this theatre during my stay in the country, and I saw him for the first time. He played Rodrigue. I was deeply moved by the very first tone of his voice. It was penetrating rather than sonorous, but vibrating and strongly accentuated. His voice was much criticized. That of the Cid was supposed to be deep and powerful, just as all the heroes of antiquity were supposed to be tall and strong. A king who was but five feet six inches could not wear the diadem ; it would have been contrary to the decrees of taste. Lelio was small and slender. His beauty lay not in the features, but in the nobleness of his forehead, the irresistible grace of his attitude, the careless ease of his movements, the proud but melancholy expression of his face.

“ The word charm should have been invented for him ; it belonged to all his words, to all his glances, to all his motions. It was indeed a charm which he threw around me. This man, who stepped, spoke, moved without system or affectation, who sobbed with his heart as much as with his voice, who forgot himself to become identified with his passion ; this man in whom the body seemed wasted and shattered by the soul, and a single one of whose glances contained all the life I failed to find in real life, exercised over me a really magnetic power.

“ I alone could follow and understand him, and he was for five years my king, my life, my love. To me he was much more than a man. His was an intellectual power which formed my soul at its will. Soon I was unable to conceal the impression he made on me. I gave up my box at the Comédie Française in order not to betray myself. I pretended I had become pious, and in the evening went to pray in the churches ; instead of that I dressed myself as a working woman and mingled with the common people that I might listen to him unconstrained.

“ At last I bribed one of the employees of the theatre to let me occupy a little corner where no one could see me and which I reached by a side corridor. As an additional precaution I dressed myself as a schoolboy. When the hour for the theatre sounded in the large clock in my drawing-room I was seized with violent palpitations. While my carriage was getting ready I tried to control myself ; and if Larrieux

¹ *Le Cid*, a Tragedy by Corneille.

happened to be with me I was rude to him, and threatened to send him away. I must have had great dissimulation and great tact to have hidden all this for five years from Larrieux, the most jealous of men, and from all the malicious people about me.

" I must tell you that instead of struggling against this passion I yielded to it with eagerness, with delight. It was so pure ! Why should I have blushed for it ? It gave me new life ; it initiated me into all the feelings I had wished to experience ; it almost made me a woman. I was proud to feel myself thrill and tremble. The first time my dormant heart beat aloud was to me a triumph. I learned to pout, to love, to be faithful and capricious. It was remarked I grew handsomer every day, that my dark eyes softened, that my smile was more expressive, that what I said was truer and had more meaning than could have been expected.

" I have just told you that when I heard the clock strike I trembled with joy and impatience. Even now I seem to feel the delicious oppression which used to overwhelm me at the sound of that clock. Since then, through the vicissitudes of fortune, I have come to find myself very happy in the possession of a few small rooms in the Marais. Well, of all my magnificent house, my aristocratic *faubourg*, and my past splendour I regret only that which could have recalled to me those days of love and dreams. I have saved from the general ruin a few pieces of furniture which I look upon with as much emotion as if the hour for the theatre were about to strike now, and my horses were pawing at the door. Oh ! my child, never love as I loved ; it is a storm which death alone can quell.

" Then I learned to take pleasure in being young, wealthy, and beautiful. Seated in my coach, my feet buried in furs, I could see myself reflected in the mirror in front of me. The dress of that time, which has since been so laughed at, was of extraordinary richness and splendour. When arranged with taste and modified in its exaggeration, it endowed a beautiful woman with dignity, with a softness, the grace of which the portraits of that time could give you no idea. A woman, clothed in its panoply of feathers, of silks, and flowers, was obliged to move slowly. I have seen very fair women in white robes with long trains of watered silk, their hair powdered and dressed with white plumes, who might without exaggeration have been compared to swans.

" Despite all Rousseau has said, those enormous folds of satin,

that profusion of muslin which enveloped a slender little body as down envelops a dove, made us resemble birds rather than wasps. Long wings of lace fell from our arms, and our ribbons, purses, and jewels were variegated with the most brilliant colours. Balancing ourselves in our little high-heeled shoes, we seemed to fear to touch the earth, and walked with the disdainful circumspection of a little bird on the edge of a brook.

“ At the time of which I am speaking blonde powder began to be worn and gave the hair a light and soft colour. This method of modifying the crude shades of the hair gave softness to the face, and an extraordinary brilliance to the eyes. The forehead was completely uncovered, its outline melted insensibly into the pale shades of the hair. It thus appeared higher and prouder, and gave all women a majestic air. It was the fashion, too, to dress the hair low, with large curls thrown back and falling on the neck. This was very becoming to me, and I was celebrated for the taste and magnificence of my dress. I sometimes wore red velvet with grebe-skin, sometimes white satin edged with tiger-skin, sometimes lilac damask shot with silver, with white feathers and pearls in my hair.

“ Thus attired I would pay a few visits until the hour for the second piece at the theatre, for Lelio never came on in the first. I created a sensation wherever I appeared, and, when I again found myself in my carriage, I contemplated with much pleasure the reflected image of the woman who loved Lelio, and might have been loved by him. Until then, the only pleasure I had found in being beautiful lay in the jealousy I excited. But from the moment that I loved I began to enjoy my beauty for its own sake. It was all I had to offer Lelio as a compensation for the triumphs which were denied him in Paris, and I loved to think of the pride and joy this poor actor, so misjudged, so laughed at, would feel were he told that the Marquise de R—— had dedicated her heart to him.

“ These the dreams, however, were as brief as they were beautiful. As soon as my thoughts assumed some consistency, as soon as they took the form of any plan whatever, I had the fortitude to suppress them, and all the pride of rank reasserted its empire over my soul. You seem surprised at this. I will explain it by and by.

“ About eight o'clock my carriage stopped at the little Church of the Carmelites near the Luxembourg, and I sent it away, for I was supposed to be attending the religious lectures which were given there

at that hour. But I only crossed the church and the garden and came out on the other street. I went to the garret of the young needle-woman named Florence, who was devoted to me. I locked myself up in her room, and joyfully laid aside all my adornments to don the black square-cut coat, the sword and wig of a young college professor.

" Tall, with my dark complexion and inoffensive glances, I really had the awkward hypocritical look of a little priestling who had stolen in to see the play. I took a hackney-coach, and hastened to hide myself in my little box at the theatre. Then my joy, my terror, my trembling ceased. A profound calm came upon me and I remained until the raising of the curtain as if absorbed in expectation of some great solemnity.

" As the vulture in his hypnotic circling surrounds the partridge and holds him panting and motionless, so did the soul of Lelio, that great soul of a poet and tragedian, envelop all my faculties, and plunge me into a torpor of admiration. I listened, my hands clasped upon my knees and my chin upon the front of the box, and my forehead bathed in perspiration ; I hardly breathed ; the crude light of the lamps tortured my eyes, which, tired and burning, were fastened on his every gesture, his every step. His feigned motions, his simulated misfortune, impressed me as if they were real. I could hardly distinguish between truth and illusion. To me, Lelio was indeed Rodrigue, Bajazet, Hippolyte. I hated his enemies. I trembled at his dangers ; his sorrows drew from me floods of tears, and when he died I was compelled to stifle my emotions in my handkerchief.

" Between the acts I sat down at the back of my box ; I was as one dead until the meagre tone of the orchestra warned me that the curtain was about to rise again. Then I sprang up, full of strength and ardour, the power to feel, to weep. How much freshness, poetry, and youth there was in that man's talent ! That whole generation must have been of ice not to have fallen at his feet.

" And yet, although he offended every conventional idea, although he could not adapt his taste to that silly public, although he scandalized the women by the carelessness of his dress and deportment, and displeased the men by his contempt for their foolish actions, there were moments when, by an irresistible fascination, by the power of his eye and his voice, he held the whole of this ungrateful public as if in the hollow of his hand, and compelled it to applaud and tremble.

" This happened but seldom, for the entire spirit of the age cannot

be suddenly changed ; but when it did happen; the applause was frantic. It seemed as if the Parisians, subjugated by his genius, wished to atone for all their injustice. As for me, I believed that this man had at most a supernatural power, and that those who most bitterly despised him were compelled to swell his triumph in spite of themselves. In truth, at such times the Comédie Française seemed smitten with madness, and the spectators, on leaving the theatre, were amazed to remember that they had applauded Lelio. As for me, I seized the opportunity to give full play to my emotion ; I shouted, I wept, I passionately called his name. Happily for me, my weak voice was drowned in the storm which raged about me

“ At other times he was hissed when he seemed to me to be sublime, and then I left the theatre, my heart full of rage. Those nights were the most dangerous for me. I was violently tempted to seek him out, to weep with him, to curse the age in which we lived, and to console him by offering him my enthusiasm and love.

“ One evening as I left the theatre by the side passage which led to my box, a small, slender man passed in front of me, and turned into the street. One of the stage-carpenters took off his hat and said : ‘ Good evening, Monsieur Lelio.’

“ Eager to obtain a nearer view of this extraordinary man, I ran after him, crossed the street, and, forgetting the danger to which I exposed myself, followed him into a café. Fortunately, it was not one in which I was likely to meet any one of my own rank.

“ When, by the light of the smoky lamp, I looked at Lelio, I thought I had been mistaken and had followed another man. He was at least thirty-five, sallow, withered, and worn out. He was badly dressed, he looked vulgar, spoke in a hoarse, broken voice, shook hands with the meanest wretches, drank brandy, and swore horribly.

“ It was not until I had heard his name repeated several times that I felt sure that this was the divinity of the theatre, interpreter of the great Corneille. I could recognize none of those charms which had so fascinated me, not even his glance, so bright, so ardent, and so sad. His eyes were dull, dead, almost stupid ; his strongly-accentuated pronunciation seemed ignoble when he called to the waiter, or talked of gambling and taverns. He walked badly, he looked vulgar, and the paint was only half wiped from his cheeks. It was no longer Hippolyte—it was Lelio. The temple was empty ; the oraclé was dumb ; the divinity had become a man, not even a man—an actor.

" He went out, and I sat stupefied, without even presence of mind enough to drink the hot spiced wine I had called for. When I remembered where I was, and perceived the insulting glances which were heaped upon me, I became frightened. It was the first time I had ever found myself in such an equivocal position, and in such immediate contact with people of that class.

" I rose and tried to escape, but forgot to pay my reckoning. The waiter ran after me ; I was terribly ashamed ; I was obliged to return, enter into explanations at the desk, and endure all the mocking and suspicious looks which were turned upon me.

" When I left I thought I was followed. In vain I looked for a hackney-coach ; there were none remaining in front of the theatre. I constantly heard heavy steps echoing my own. Trembling, I turned my head, and recognized a tall, ill-looking fellow whom I had noticed in one corner of the café, and who had very much the air of a spy or something worse. He spoke to me ; I do not know what he said ; I was too much frightened to hear, but I had still presence of mind enough to rid myself of him. I struck him in the face with my cane, and, leaving him stunned at my audacity, I shot away swift as an arrow, and did not stop till I reached Florence's little garret.

" When I awoke the next morning in my own bed, with its wadded curtains and coronal of pink feathers, I almost thought I had dreamed, and felt greatly mortified when I recollected the disillusions of the previous night. I thought myself thoroughly cured of my love, and I tried to rejoice at it, but in vain. I was filled with a mortal regret, the weariness of life again entered my heart, the world had not a pleasure which could charm me.

" Evening came, but brought no more beneficial emotions. Society seemed to me stupid. I went to church and listened to the evening lecture with a determination of becoming pious ; I caught cold, and came home quite ill. I remained in bed several days. The Comtesse de Ferrières came to see me, assured me that I had no fever, that lying still made me ill, that I must amuse myself, go out, go to the theatre. She compelled me to go with her to see *Cinna*.¹

" ' You no longer go to the theatre,' said she to me ; ' your health is undermined by your piety, and the dulness of your life. You have not seen Lelio for some time ; he has improved, and he is now sometimes applauded. I think he may some day become very tolerable.'

¹ *Cinna*, a Tragedy by Corneille.

"I do not know why I allowed myself to be persuaded. However, as I was completely disenchanted with Lelio, I thought I no longer ran any risk in braving his fascinations in public. I dressed myself with excessive brilliance, and, in a court proscenium box, fronted a danger in which I no longer believed.

"But the danger was never more imminent. Lelio was sublime, and I had never been more in love with him. My recent adventure seemed but a dream. I could not believe that Lelio was other than he seemed upon the stage. In spite of myself, I yielded to the terrible agitations into which he had the power of throwing me. My face was bathed in tears, and I was compelled to cover it with my handkerchief.

"In the disorder of my mind I wiped off my rouge and my patches, and the Comtesse de Ferrières advised me to retire to the back of my box, for my emotion was creating a sensation in the house. I fortunately had had the skill to make every one believe it was the playing of Mlle. Hippolyte Clairon which affected me so deeply. She was, in my own opinion, a very cold and formal actress, too superior perhaps for her profession, as it was then understood; but her manner of saying 'Tout beau,' in *Cinna*, had given her a great reputation. It must be said, however, that when she played with Lelio she outdid herself. Although she took pains to proclaim her share in the fashionable contempt for his method of acting, she assuredly felt the influence of his genius.

"That evening Lelio noticed me, either on account of my dress or my emotion; for I saw him, when he was not acting, bend over one of the spectators, who, at that epoch, sat upon the stage, and inquire my name. I guessed his question by the way both looked at me.

"My heart beat almost to suffocation, and I noticed during the play that Lelio's eyes turned several times toward me. What would I not have given to hear what the Chevalier de Bretillac, whom he had questioned, had said to him about me! Lelio's face did not indicate the nature of the information he had received, for he was obliged to retain the expression suited to his part. I knew this Bretillac very slightly, and I could not imagine whether he would speak well or ill of me.

"That night I understood for the first time the nature of the passion which enchained me to Lelio. It was a passion purely intellectual, purely ideal. It was not he I loved, but those heroes of ancient

times whose sincerity, whose fidelity, whose tenderness he knew how to portray ; with him and by him I was carried back to an epoch of forgotten virtues. I was bright enough to think that in those days I should not have been misjudged and hated, and that I should not have been reduced to loving a phantom of the footlights.

" Lelio was to me but the shadow of the Cid, the representative of that antique chivalric love now ridiculed in France. My Lelio was a fictitious being who had no existence outside the theatre. The illusions of the stage, the glare of the footlights, were a part of the being whom I loved. Without them he was nothing to me, and faded like a story before the brightness of day. I had no desire to see him off the boards ; and should have been in despair had I met him. It would have been like contemplating the ashes of a great man.

" One evening as I was going to the Carmelite church with the intention of leaving it by the passage door, I perceived that I was followed, and became convinced that henceforth it would be almost impossible to conceal the object of my nocturnal expeditions. I decided to go publicly to the theatre. Lelio saw me and watched me ; my beauty had struck him, my sensibility flattered him. His attention sometimes wandered so much as to displease the public. Soon I could no longer doubt. He was madly in love with me.

" My box had pleased the Princess de Vaudemont. I gave it up to her, and took for myself a smaller one, less in view of the house and better situated. I was almost upon the stage, I did not lose one of Lelio's glances ; and he could look at me without its being seen by the public. But I no longer needed to catch his eye in order to understand all his feelings. The sound of his voice, his sighs, the expression which he gave to certain verses, certain words, told me that he was speaking to me. I was the happiest and proudest of women, for then it was the hero, not the actor, who loved me.

" I have since heard that Lelio often followed me in my walks and drives ; so little did I desire to see him outside of the theatre that I never perceived it. Of the eighty years I have passed in this world, those five are the only ones in which I really lived.

" One day I read in the *Mercure de France* the name of a new actor engaged at the Comédie Française to replace Lelio, who was about to leave France.

" This announcement was a mortal blow to me. I could not conceive how I should exist when deprived of these emotions, this life of passion

and storm. This event gave an immense development to my love, and was well-nigh my ruin.

"I no longer struggled with myself; I no longer sought to stifle all thoughts contrary to the dignity of my rank. I regretted that he was not what he appeared on the stage; I wished him as young and handsome as he seemed each night before the footlights, that I might sacrifice to him all my pride, all my prejudices.

"While I was in this state of irresolution, I received a letter in an unknown hand. It is the only love-letter I have ever kept. Though Larrieux has written me innumerable protestations, and I have received a thousand perfumed declarations from a hundred others, it is the only real love-letter that was ever sent me."

The Marquise rose, opened with a steady hand an inlaid casket, and took from it a crumpled, worn-out letter, which I read with difficulty:

"MADAME—I am certain you will feel nothing but contempt for this letter, you will not even deem it worthy of your anger. But, to a man falling into an abyss, what matters one more stone at the bottom? You will think me mad, and you will be right. You will perhaps pity me, for you will not doubt my sincerity. However humble your piety may have made you, you will understand the extent of my despair; you must already know *how much evil and how much good your eyes can do*. . . .

"You must know this already, madame; it is impossible that the violent emotions I have portrayed upon the stage, my cries of wrath and despair, have not twenty times revealed to you my passion. You cannot have lighted all these flames without being conscious of what you did. Perhaps you played with me as a tiger with his prey; perhaps the spectacle of my folly and my tortures was your pastime. But no; to think so were to presume too much. No, madame, I do not believe it; you never thought of me. You felt the verses of the great Corneille, you identified these with the noble passions of tragedy; that was all.

"And I, madman that I was, I dared to think that my voice alone sometimes awoke your sympathies, that my heart echoed in yours, that between you and me there was something more than between me and the public. Oh, my madness was arrant, but it was sweet! Leave me my illusions, madame; what are they to you? Do you fear that I should boast of them? By what right should I do so, and who

would believe me? I should only make myself a laughing-stock of sensible people. Leave me this conviction; it has given me more joy than the severity of the public has caused me sorrow. Let me bless you, let me thank you upon my knees, for the sensibility which I have discovered in your soul, and which no one else has ever shown me; for the tears which I have seen you shed for my fictitious sorrows, and which have often raised my inspiration almost to delirium; for the timid glances which sought, at least it seemed so, to console me for the coldness of my audience. Oh, why were you born to pomp and splendour! Why am I an obscure and nameless artist! Why have I not riches and the favour of the public, that I might exchange them for a name, for one of those titles which I have hitherto disdained, and which, perhaps, would permit me to aspire as high as you are placed!

“Once I deemed the distinctions conferred upon talent superior to all others. To what purpose, thought I, is a man a Chevalier or a Marquis but to be the sillier, the vainer, and the more insolent? I hated the pride of men of rank, and thought that I should be sufficiently avenged for their disdain if my genius raised me above them. Dreams and delusions all! My strength has not equalled my mad ambition. I have remained obscure; I have done worse—I have touched success, and allowed it to escape me. I thought myself great, and I was cast down to the dust; I imagined that I was almost sublime, and I was condemned to be ridiculous. Fate took me—me and my audacious dreams—and crushed me as if I had been a reed! I am a most wretched man! But I committed my greatest folly when I cast my eyes beyond that row of lights which marked between me and the rest of society an invisible line of separation. It is to me a circle of Popilius. I, an actor, I dared to raise my eyes and fasten them upon a beautiful woman—upon a woman, young, lovely, and of high rank; for you are all this, madame, and I know it. The world accuses you of coldness and of exaggerated piety. I alone understand you. Your first smile, your first tear, sufficiently disproved the absurd fable which the Chevalier de Bretillac repeated against you.

“But then what a destiny is yours! What fatality weighs upon you as upon me, that in the midst of society so brilliant, which calls itself so enlightened, you should have found only the heart of a poor actor to do you justice. Nothing will deprive me of the sad and consoling thought that, had we been born in the same rank, you would have been mine in spite of my rivals, in spite of my inferiority. You

would have been compelled to acknowledge that there is in me something greater than their wealth, and their titles—the power of loving you.
LELIO.”

“ This letter,” continued the Marquise, “ was of a character very unusual at the time it was written, and seemed to me, notwithstanding some passages of theatrical declamation at the beginning, so powerful, so true, so full of only bold passion, that I was overwhelmed by it. The pride which still struggled within me faded away. I would have given all the remaining days I had to live one hour of such love.

“ I answered in these words, as nearly as I can remember :

“ ‘ I do not accuse you, Lelio ; I accuse destiny. I do not pity you alone ; I pity myself also. Neither pride nor prudence shall make me deny you the consolation of believing that I have felt a preference for you. Keep it, for it is the only one I can offer you. I can never consent to see you.’

“ Next day I received a note which I hastily read and threw into the fire, to prevent Larrieux from seeing it, for he came suddenly upon me while I was reading it. It read thus :

“ ‘ MADAME—I must see you or I must die. Once—once only, but for a single hour, if such is your will. Why should you fear an interview since you trust my honour and my prudence. Madame, I know who you are ; I am well aware of your piety and of the austerity of your life. I am not fool enough to hope for anything but a word of compassion, but it must fall from your own lips. My heart must receive it and bear it away, or my heart must break. LELIO.’

“ I believed implicitly in the humility, in the sincerity of Lelio. Besides, I had ample reason to trust my own strength. I resolved to see him. I had completely forgotten his faded features, his low-bred manners, his vulgar aspect ; I recollected only the fascination of his genius, his letters, and his love. I answered :

“ ‘ I will see you. Find some secure place, but hope for nothing but for what you have asked. Should you seek to abuse my trust, you would be a villain, and I should not fear you.’

“ Answer :

“ ‘ Your trust would save you from the basest of villains. You will see, Madame, that Lelio is not unworthy of it. Duke —— has often

been good enough to offer me the use of his house in the Rue de Valois Deign to go thither after the play.'

"Some explanations and directions as to the locality of the house followed. I received this note at four o'clock. The whole negotiation had occupied but a day. I had spent it in wandering through the house like one distracted ; I was in a fever. This rapid succession of events bore me along as in a dream.

"When I had made the final decision, when it was impossible to draw back, I sank down upon my ottoman, breathless and dizzy.

"I was really ill. A surgeon was sent for ; I was bled. I told my servants not to mention my indisposition to any one ; I dreaded the intrusion of officious advisers, and was determined not to be prevented from going out that night.

"I threw myself upon my bed to await the appointed hour, and gave orders that no visitors should be admitted. The blood-letting had relieved and weakened me ; I sank into a great depression of spirits. All my illusions vanished with the excitement which had accompanied my fever. Reason and memory returned ; I remembered my disenchantment in the coffee-house, and Lelio's wretched appearance there ; I prepared to blush for my folly, and to fall from the height of my deceitful visions to a bare and despicable reality. I no longer understood how it had been possible for me to consent to exchange my heroic and romantic tenderness for the revulsion of feeling which awaited me, and the sense of shame which would henceforth poison all my recollections. I bitterly regretted what I had done ; I wept my illusions, my love, and that future of pure and secret joys which I was about to forfeit. Above all, I mourned for Lelio, whom in seeing I should for ever lose, in whose love I had found five years of happiness, and for whom in a few hours I should feel nothing but indifference.

"In the paroxysm of my grief I violently wrung my arms ; the vein reopened, and I had barely time to ring for my maid, who found me in a swoon in my bed. A deep and heavy sleep, against which I struggled in vain, seized me. I neither dreamed nor suffered ; I was as one dead for several hours. When I again opened my eyes my room was almost dark, my house silent ; my waiting-woman was asleep in a chair at the foot of my bed. I remained for some time in such a state of numbness and weakness that I recollected nothing.

" Suddenly my memory returned, and I asked myself whether the hour and the day of rendezvous were passed, whether I had slept an hour or a century ; whether I had killed Lelio by breaking my word. Was there yet time ? I tried to rise, but my strength failed me. I struggled for some moments as if in a nightmare. At last I summoned all the forces of my will. I sprang to the floor, opened the curtains, and saw the moon shining upon the trees of my garden. I ran to the clock ; the hands marked ten. I seized my maid and waked her : ' Quinette, what day of the week is it ? '

" She sprang from her chair, screaming, and tried to escape from me, for she thought me delirious ; I reassured her and learned that I had only slept three hours. I thanked God. I asked for a hackney-coach. Quinette looked at me in amazement. At last she became convinced that I had the full use of my senses, transmitted my order, and began to dress me.

" I asked for my simplest dress ; I put no ornaments in my hair, I refused to wear my rouge. I wished above all things for Lelio's esteem and respect, for they were far more precious to me than his love. Nevertheless, I was pleased when Quinette, who was much surprised at this new caprice, said, examining me from head to foot : ' Truly, madame, I know not how you manage it. You are dressed in a plain white robe, without either train or pannier ; you are ill and as pale as death ; you have not even put on a patch ; yet I never saw you so beautiful as to-night. I pity the men who will look upon you ! '

" ' Do you think me so very austere, my poor Quinette ? '

" ' Alas, madame, every day I pray Heaven to make me like you ; but up to this time——'

" ' Come, simpleton, give me my mantle and muff.'

" At midnight I was in the house in the Rue de Valois. I was carefully veiled, a sort of valet de chambre received me ; he was the only human being to be seen in this mysterious dwelling. He led me through the windings of a dark garden to a pavilion buried in silence and shadow. Depositing his green silk lantern in the vestibule, he opened the door of a large dusky room, showed me by a respectful gesture and with a most impassive face a ray of light proceeding from the other extremity, and said, in a tone so low that it seemed as if he feared to awaken the sleeping echoes : ' Your ladyship is alone, no one else has yet come. Your ladyship will find in the summer parlour

a bell which I will answer if you need anything.' He disappeared as if by enchantment, shutting the door upon me.

"I was terribly frightened; I thought I had fallen into some trap. I called him back. He instantly reappeared, and his air of stupid solemnity reassured me. I asked him what time it was, although I knew perfectly well, for I had sounded my watch twenty times in the carriage. 'It is midnight,' answered he, without raising his eyes.

"I now resolutely entered the summer parlour, and I realised how unfounded were my fears when I saw that the doors which opened upon the garden were only of painted silk. Nothing could be more charming than this boudoir; it was fitted up as a concert-room. The walls were of stucco as white as snow, and the mirrors were framed in unpolished silver. Musical instruments of unusually rich material were scattered about, upon seats of white velvet, trimmed with pearls. The light came from above through leaves of alabaster, which formed a dome. This soft, even light might have been mistaken for that of the moon. A single statue of white marble stood in the middle of the room; it was an antique and represented Isis veiled, with her finger upon her lips. The mirrors which reflected us, both pale and draped in white, produced such an illusion upon me that I was obliged to distinguish my finger from hers.

"Suddenly the silence was interrupted; the door was opened and closed, and light footsteps sounded upon the floor. I sank into a chair more dead than alive, for I was about to see Lelio shorn of the illusions of the stage. I closed my eyes, and inwardly bade them farewell before I reopened them.

"But how much was I surprised! Lelio was beautiful as an angel. He had not taken off his stage dress, and it was the most elegant I had ever seen him wear. His Spanish doublet was of white satin, his shoulder and garter knots of cherry ribbons, and a short cloak of the same colour was thrown over his shoulder. He wore an immense ruff of English lace; his hair was short and unpowdered, partially covered by a cap with white feathers and a diamond rose. In this costume he had just played Don Juan in Molière's *Festin de Pierre*. Never had I seen him so beautiful, so young, so poetical, as at that moment. Velasquez would have worshipped such a model.

"He knelt before me. I could not help stretching out my hand to him, he seemed so submissive, so fearful of displeasing me. A man

sufficiently in love to tremble before a woman was rare in those times, and this one was thirty-five and an actor.

"It seemed to me then, it seems to me still, that he was in the first bloom of youth. In his white dress he looked like a young page; his forehead had all the purity, his heart all the ardour of a first love. He took my hands and covered them with kisses. My senses seemed to desert me; I caressed his burning forehead, his stiff, black hair, and the brown neck which disappeared in the soft whiteness of his collar. He wept like a woman; I was overwhelmed with surprise.

"I wept delicious tears. I compelled him to raise his head and look at me. How splendid, how tender were his eyes! How much fascination his warm, true soul communicated to the very defects of his face, and the scars left upon it by time and toil! When I saw the premature wrinkles upon his beautiful forehead, when I saw the pallor of his lips, the languor of his smile, my heart was melted. I felt that I must needs weep for his griefs, his disappointments, the labours of his life. I identified myself with him in all his sorrows, even that of his long, hopeless love for me, and I had but one wish—to compensate him for the ills he had suffered.

"My dear Lelio, my great Rodrigue, my beautiful Don Juan! He spoke to me, he told me how from a dissipated actor I had made him a man full of life and ardour; how I had raised him in his own eyes, and restored to him the illusions of his youth; he spoke of his respect, his veneration for me, of his contempt for the species of love which was then in fashion. Never did a man with more penetrating eloquence speak to the heart of a woman; never did Racine make love utter itself with such conviction of its own truth, such poetry, such strength. Everything elevated and profound, everything sweet and fiery which passion can inspire, lay in his words, his face, his eyes, his caresses. Alas! did he deceive himself! Was he playing a part?"

"I certainly do not think so," I cried, looking at the Marquise. She seemed to grow young as she spoke; and, like the fairy Urgela, to cast off her hundred years. I know not who has said that a woman's heart has no wrinkles.

"Listen to the end," said she. "I threw my arms around his neck; I shivered as I touched the satin of his coat, as I breathed the perfume of his hair. My emotion was too violent and I fainted.

"He recalled me to myself by his prompt assistance. I found

him still kneeling at my feet. 'Pity me, kill me,' cried he. He was paler and far more ill than I.

" 'Listen, Lelio,' said I. 'Here we separate for ever, but let us carry from this place a whole future of blissful thoughts and adored memories. I swear, Lelio, to love you till my death. I swear it without fear, for I feel that the snows of age will not have the power to extinguish this ardent flame.'

" Lelio knelt before me ; he did not implore me, he did not reproach me ; he said that he had not hoped for so much happiness as I had given him, and that he had no right to ask for more. Nevertheless, as he bade me farewell, his despair, the emotion which trembled in his face, terrified me. I asked him if he would not find happiness in thinking of me, if the ecstasy of our meeting would not lend its charm to all the days of his life, if his past and future sorrows would not be softened each time he recalled it. He roused himself to promise, to swear all I asked. He again fell at my feet and passionately kissed my dress. I made a sign and he left me. The carriage I had sent for came.

" The automatic servant of the house knocked three times outside to warn me. Lelio despairingly threw himself in front of the door : he looked like a spectre. I gently repulsed him and he yielded. I crossed the threshold, and as he attempted to follow me, I showed him a chair in the middle of the room, underneath the statue of Isis. He sat down in it. A passionate smile wandered over his lips, his eyes sent out one more flash of gratitude and love. He was still beautiful, still young, still a grandee of Spain.

" After a few steps, when I was about to lose him for ever, I turned back and looked at him once more. Despair had crushed him. He was old, altered, frightful. His body seemed paralysed. His stiffened lips attempted an unmeaning smile. His eyes were glassy and dim ; he was now only Lelio, the shadow of a lover and a prince."

The Marquise paused ; then, while her aspect changed like that of a ruin which totters and sinks, she added : " Since then I have not heard him mentioned."

The Marquise made a second and a longer pause ; then, with the terrible fortitude which comes with length of years, which springs from the persistent love of life or the near hope of death, she said with a smile : " Well, do you not now believe in the ideality of the eighteenth century ? "

JULES JANIN

1804-1874

THE VENDEAN MARRIAGE

SO you have never heard the circumstances of Monsieur Baudelot de Dairval's marriage, the man who died four years ago, and was so mourned by his wife that she died a week later herself, good lady? Yet it is a story worth telling.

It happened in Vendée, and the hero, a Vendean, brave, young, daring, and of fine family, died tranquilly in his bed without ever suspecting that there would be a second rising in Vendée.

Baudelot de Dairval was the grandson of that César Baudelot who is mentioned in the Memoirs of the Duchess of Orleans, own mother of the regent Louis Philippe. This woman, who has thrown such contempt on the greatest names of France, could not help praising César de Baudelot. Saint-Simon, sceptic and mocker, but good fellow withal, also spoke highly of him. So you'll understand that bearing such a name young Henri was not backward in the first rising in Vendée, in protesting, arms in hand, against the excesses of the Revolution. Baudelot was a Vendean simply because a man of his name and nature could be nothing else. He fought like his associates, neither more nor less. He was the friend of Cathelmeau and of all the others. He took part in those battles of giants; fighting stoutly in the battle, and then laughing and singing as soon as he no longer heard the cries of the wounded. What wars, what wild tempests were ever like those? But it is not my business to tell again the story so often told.

But I want to tell you that one day, surprised at a farm by a detachment of the Republican Blues, Baudelot unexpectedly called together his troop. "My friends," said he, "this farm is surrounded. You must all escape! Take with you the women and children. Rejoin our chief, Cathelmeau. As for me, I'll stay and defend the gate. I certainly can hold it alone for ten minutes. Those three thousand out there would massacre us all. Good-bye, good-bye, my brave fellows! Don't forget me! It's my turn to-day. You'll get yourselves killed to-morrow!"

In those exceptional times and in that exceptional war, nothing seemed astonishing. Men did not even think of those rivalries in heroism so frequent in civilised warfare. In such a struggle of extermination there was no time to pose for sublimity of soul. Heroism was quite unaffected. So Baudelot's soldiers judged for themselves that their chief spoke sensibly, and obeyed as simply as he had commanded. They withdrew by the roof, taking away the women and children. Baudelot remained at the door making noise enough for forty, haranguing, disputing and discharging his gun. One would have thought a whole regiment ready to fire was stationed there, and the Blues held themselves on the alert. Baudelot remained on the defensive as long as he had any voice. But when that failed and he thought his troop must have reached a place of safety, he tired of the warlike feint. He felt ill at ease at thus commanding the absent ; and keeping quiet, he merely propped up the door as it was shaken from outside. This lasted several minutes, then the door cracked, and the Blues began to fire through the fissures. Baudelot was not wounded, and as his meal had been interrupted, he returned to the table and tranquilly ate some bread and cheese, and emptied a pitcher of country wine, thinking meanwhile that this was his last repast !

Finally the Blues forced the door and rushed in. It took them some minutes to clear away obstructions, and to recognise each other in the smoke of their guns. These soldiers of the Republic hunted eagerly with look and sword for the armed troop which had withstood them so long. Judge their surprise at seeing only a tall, very handsome young man, calmly eating black bread moistened with wine. Dumb with astonishment the conquerors stopped and leaned on their guns, and thus gave Henri Baudelot time to swallow his last mouthful.

"To your health, gentlemen !" he said, lifting his glass to his lips. "The garrison thanks you for the respite you have granted." At the same time he rose, and going straight to the Captain, said : "Monsieur, I am the only person in this house. I am quite ready for death."

Then he kept quiet, and waited. To his great surprise he was not shot at once. Perhaps he had fallen into the hands of recruits so little exercised as to delay twenty-four hours before killing a man. Perhaps his captors were moved by his coolness and fine bearing, and were ashamed at setting three hundred to kill one. We must remember that in that sad war there were French feelings on both sides.

So they contented themselves with tying his hands and leading him, closely watched, to a manor on the outskirts of Nantes, which, once an attractive country-seat, had now become a kind of fortress. Its master was no other than the chief of the Blues, who had captured Baudelot. This Breton, a gentleman although a Blue, had been one of the first to share the enthusiasm of the revolutionaries. He was one of those nobles so heroic to their own injury, who renounced in a day fortunes, their coats of arms, and their own names, forgetting both what they had promised their fathers and what they owed to their sons, equally oblivious of past and future, and unfortunate victims of the present. But we will not reproach them, for either they died under the stroke of the Revolution, or lived long enough to see that all their sacrifices were vain.

Baudelot de Dairval was confined in the donjon, or, rather, in the pigeon-house of his conqueror. The doves had been expelled to give place to Chouan captives. Still covered with shining slates, still surmounted by its creaking weather-cock, this prison had retained a calm, gracious air, and it had not been thought necessary to bar the openings by which the pigeons came and went. A little straw had been added to the usual furniture.

At first the dovecote of a country manor struck him as a novel prison. He decided that as soon as his hands were free he would compose a romance upon it, with a guitar accompaniment. While thus thinking, he heard a violin and other instruments playing a joyful march. By piling up the straw against the wall and leaning on it with his elbow, Baudelot could look out of one of the openings. He saw a long procession of young men and pretty women in white gowns, preceded by village fiddlers, and all merry and joyous. As it passed at the foot of the dovecote, a pretty girl looked up attentively. She was fair, slender and dreamy-looking. Baudelot felt that she knew of the prisoner, and he began to whistle the air of Richard, "In an Obscure Tower," or something of the kind. For this young man was versed in all kinds of accomplishments, equally skilful with sword and guitar, an adept at horsemanship, a fine dancer, a true gentleman of wit and sword, such as are manufactured no more.

The wedding procession passed, or, at least, if not a wedding it was a betrothal, and Baudelot stopped singing. He heard a sound at his prison door ; some one entered.

It was the master of the house himself. He had been a Marquis

under Capet, now he called himself simply Hamelin. He was a Blue, but a decent soul enough. The Republic ruled him body and soul ; he lent his sword and his castle. But he had not become cruel or wicked in its service. The morning of this very day, Captain Hamelin, for so he had been appointed by the Republic, learning that some Chouans were at his farm, had headed a detachment of Blues and postponed his betrothal. You know how he had seized Baudelot. As soon as the Chouan was in keeping the Captain had returned to his betrothal feast, and this is the reason why he did not shoot the prisoner at once or take him to Nantes.

Captain Hamelin was not so thorough a Blue as to have quite forgotten the hospitable old customs of Bretagne soil. Therefore, while his friends were sitting down to table, he felt it incumbent to call upon his captive.

" Can I do anything for you, monsieur ? " he asked.

" Monsieur," said Baudelot, bowing, " I should like the use of at least one of my hands."

" Your hands shall be unbound, monsieur," answered Hamelin, " if you will promise not to try to escape. But before you promise, remember that at six o'clock to-morrow morning you will surely be taken to Nantes."

" And shot at eight o'clock just as surely ? " asked Baudelot.

Captain Hamelin was silent.

" Very well, monsieur," said Baudelot. " Unbind my hands, and unless I'm delivered, I give my word as a gentleman and a Christian to stay here like a pigeon with clipped wings."

Captain Hamelin could not help smiling at his prisoner's allusion, and untied his hands.

" Now," said Baudelot, stretching his arms like a man stiff from sleep, " now, monsieur, I thank you, and am truly your servant until to-morrow. It will not be my fault if my gratitude does not last longer ! "

Captain Hamelin said : " If you have any last arrangements—a will to make, for instance—I will send you writing materials." He was touched, for he was not a Breton for nothing.

Seeing this, Baudelot took his hand. " Do you know," he said sadly, " that simple word ' will ' wounds me more than the words ' death at Nantes ! ' It recalls that all my friends are dead. There is no one to whom I can bequeath my name, my sword, my love and

my hate, and these are all I have left. Yet, it must be sweet to dispose of a fortune, to be generous even beyond the tomb ; and while writing last benefits, to imagine the tears of joy and sorrow they will cause. That is sweet and honourable, isn't it, Captain ? I must not think of it."

" I will send you some dinner," said Hamelin. " This is my day of betrothal, and my table is better provided than usual. My fiancée herself shall serve you, monsieur."

In one of the highest apertures of his cage, Baudelot saw a daisy which had been sown there by one of the first occupants of the dovecote. The pretty flower swayed joyously in the wind, and he gathered it and offered it to the Captain.

" It is our custom at home, Captain, to offer the bride a gift. Be so good as to give yours this little flower, which has blossomed in my domain. And now, good-night. I have kept you from your love long enough. May God remember your kindness toward me ! Good-bye. Best wishes ! Send me some supper, for I'm hungry and need rest."

And they separated with friendly looks.

Dinner was brought the young Vendean by a pretty Breton girl with white teeth, rosy lips, and the pensive air which befitted a shy country maiden who had already seen so many proscriptions. She served him zealously, and gave him no peace if he did not eat of this or that dish, drink this or that wine. It was a magnificent repast. The dovecote grew fragrant. It was almost like the time when the winged occupants of the tower gathered crumbs from the feast. As the girl was pouring champagne, Baudelot said to her :

" What is your name, my child ? "

" My name is Marie," she answered.

" The same as my cousin's," went on the young man ; " and how old are you, Marie ? "

" Seventeen years," said Marie.

" The age of my cousin," said Baudelot, and as he thought of his pretty cousin butchered by the executioner, his heart almost failed him. But he blushed to weep before this child in whose eyes tears were gathering, and as he could not speak, he held out his glass. But the glass was full, and in the last rays of the sun the champagne sparkled joyously, for wine sparkled and spring bloomed even during the Terror. Seeing that his glass was full, Baudelot said :

" You have no glass, Marie ? "

" I am not thirsty," said Marie.

" Oh ! " said Baudelot, " this bright wine does not like to be drunk by a man alone. It is convivial by nature, and rejoices to be among boon companions. It is the great support of the Fraternity of which you have heard so much, my poor Marie, and which men really comprehend so little. Be friendly ; dip your lips in my glass, my pretty Breton, if you would have me drink champagne once more before I die," and he lifted the glass to Marie's lips. She held them out, but at the words to " die " her heart overflowed, and copious tears rolled into the joyous wine.

" To your health, Marie ! " said Baudelot, and drank both wine and tears.

Just then they heard the horn, the hautboys, and the violins. " What's that ? " said the young man, setting down his glass. " God bless me, it's a ball ! "

" Alas ! " said Marie, " alas ! yes, it's a ball. My young mistress did not want dancing, but her lover and her father insisted. She is very unhappy this evening."

" Oh ! " said the young Vendean, " my good Marie, if you are as kind as I think, you'll do something for me ! Go, run, fly, tell your mistress that Count Baudelot de Dairval, Colonel of Light Horse, requests permission to pay her his respects. Or, no ; find my host, not his bride, and tell him that his prisoner is very dull, that the noise of the ball will prevent his sleeping, that the night will be long and cold, that it's a charity to snatch an unhappy young man from the sad thoughts of his last night, that I beg him, in Heaven's name, to let me attend his ball. Tell him he has my word of honour not to try to escape. Tell him all that, Marie ; and tell him whatever else comes into your heart and mind. Speak loud enough for your mistress to hear and be interested ; and, thanks to you, Marie, I'm sure he will yield. Then, child, if I am invited, send your master's valet. Tell him to bring me clean linen and powder. There must be some powder still left in the castle. Tell him to bring me one of his master's coats, and get them to lend me my sword just for the evening. I will not unsheath it. So, Marie, go, child ! " And the prisoner hurried her off and held her back in a way to make one both laugh and cry.

A few minutes later Captain Hamelin's valet appeared in the dove-cote. He was a good old fellow, faithful to powder and to all the other

customs. Although a member of the municipal council, he was an honest man, devoted to Monsieur Robespierre only because he alone in all republican France had dared to continue powder, ruffles, and embroidered vest.

He brought a complete suit, which Captain Hamelin had ordered when younger and a Marquis, to visit the court and see the King when there was a court and a King. This suit was very rich and handsome, the linen very white, the shoes very fine. Baudelot's host had forgotten nothing, not even the perfumes and cosmetics of an aristocrat. Baudelot entrusted his head to the valet, who adorned it complaisantly, not without profound sighs of regret. Baudelot was young and handsome, but had not been groomed for some time. Therefore, when he saw himself dressed, curled, and fresh shaven, his eyes animated by a good meal and by the music in the distance, he could not help smiling with self-content and recalling his beautiful nights at masked balls and at operas with the Comte de Mirabeau.

He lacked only his sword, which was given him at the door with a reminder of his promise. It was night when he crossed the garden to the ballroom.

All the most beautiful republican ladies of the province were there. But, you know, women are not so revolutionary that they do not feel aristocratic sympathy for a young and handsome gentleman who is to be shot on the morrow.

To return to our story. The betrothal ball had begun. The fiancée was Mademoiselle de Mailly, grand-niece of the beautiful De Mailly, so beloved of Madame de Maintenon. She was a sad young blonde, evidently unhappy at dancing and marrying in that period of proscription. She was one of those strong spirits which seem weak until a certain fatal hour has sounded, when apparent weakness becomes invincible energy. The heroine replaces the little girl, and the ruins of a whole world could not intimidate her, who, until then, trembled at the least sign of displeasure.

Eleanor de Mailly was then very dejected. The friends of her childhood imitated her silence and despondency. Never before was a Breton feast so gloomy. Nothing went as it should, neither dance nor dancers, and there was general lack of ease. The young men did not even try to please the pretty girls, and when the ball had scarcely begun every one wished it would end.

Suddenly the door into the great hall opened, and every one looked

that way. There entered a pretty courtier, a lost type, a handsome officer, smiling and well dressed. He had the dress and graceful bearing of old times. This apparition was in charming contrast with the dulness of the gathering. The men and women who were bluest at heart were delighted to find with them this remnant of the old French society so suddenly blotted out, alas ! And, indeed, it was charming to see this young proscrip, whom death on the morrow awaited, entering into this republican company, recalling its gaiety, and thinking of nothing but to be agreeable and please the ladies, faithful to the end to his calling of French gentleman !

His entrance took only a minute. Once in the room, he gave himself up to the ball and went to invite the first woman he saw. It was the fair-haired girl whom he had noticed in the garden. She accepted without hesitation, remembering that republican death, the most unpleasant of all deaths, was offering her partner a bloody hand. When the men saw Baudelot dancing, doomed as he was, they blushed at their own lack of ardour. All the women were invited to dance at once, and accepted in order to see Baudelot nearer. So, thanks to the victim, the ball grew nearly gay.

Baudelot heartily shared this convulsive pleasure. His smile was not forced ; his dance was light and graceful. He alone was genuinely entertained. The others amused themselves in very terror, and became almost delirious at sight of this beautiful youth, who was king of the festival far more than the bridegroom. Animated by such passion, terror, and bloody interest, the ball took possession of all. Baudelot was everywhere, saluting old ladies, like the King of France, and young ones with joy and admiration, talking to men in the mad language of youth and of nature mixed with wit.

The more he yielded to this frank and natural gaiety, the more he forgot that the night was advancing with frightful rapidity. And the later it grew the more the women trembled in their hearts at the thought that he must really die, for they were near the epoch of old French honour, which made Baudelot's presence at the ball the sign that there was no hope for him. They knew his word bound him faster than iron chains could have done. They knew that both Baudelot and Hamelin were doing right. Baudelot's pleasure did no wrong to the committee of public safety. As you may imagine, then, looks and smiles were very tender, and more than one sigh escaped at sight of the handsome proscrip. As for him, drunk with success, he had never been so full

of love and passion. So when he went to dance for the third time with the queen of the ball, the fair-haired fiancée, he felt her little hand trembling, and trembled in his turn.

For when he glanced at her she was pale and exhausted.

"What is the matter, Eleanor?" he asked. "What is the matter, madame? Out of pity for your partner, do not tremble and grow so pale!"

Then turning toward the window curtains, which were moving to the dance music, she pointed out the dawning light.

"It is morning," she said.

"Ah, well!" said Baudelot, "what does it matter? It is morning. I have passed the most beautiful night of my life. I have seen you and loved you and been able to tell you I love you, for you know the dying don't lie. And now, good-bye, Eleanor, good-bye! Be happy and accept the blessing of the Chouan!"

It was the custom in Brittany, at the end of the last square dance, to kiss the lady on the forehead. The dance finished, Baudelot pressed his lips to Eleanor's brow. She grew faint and stood motionless, her brow supported by his lips. Then she recovered herself, and Baudelot led her to a seat. She made him sit down beside her, and said:

"Listen, you must go. Listen, they are harnessing the horses to take you to Nantes. Listen, in two hours you will be dead. Fly, then! If you wish, I will go with you. Then they will say you fled out of love, not from fear. Listen, if you will not escape alone, or with me, I will throw myself under the wheels of the carriage, and you will pass over my broken body!"

She said this in a low tone, without looking at him, and almost smiling, as though speaking of another ball.

Baudelot did not listen, but he looked at her with a joy in his heart such as he never before felt.

"How I love her!" he said to himself. He answered: "You know very well that is impossible, Eleanor. Oh, yes; if I were free you should have no husband but me, but I do not belong either to myself or to you. So good-bye, beautiful angel, and if you love me give me back the wild flower I sent you from my prison. Give it back, Eleanor. The little flower has been on your breast, it will help me to die."

At that moment Eleanor looked like death. There was a solemn silence. The music had stopped, and daylight was filling the room.

Suddenly there was a great noise of horses and riders. It seemed

to come from Nantes, and all the women moved spontaneously to protect Baudelot with their bodies, but his own soldiers appeared to deliver him. They were in the garden ; they forced their way into the house, crying :

“ Baudelot ! Baudelot ! ”

They were astonished enough to find their young leader not loaded with irons, but surrounded by handsomely dressed ladies and himself adorned as they had never beheld him.

Baudelot's first question was :

“ Gentlemen, did you enter the pigeon-house ? ”

“ Yes,” was the answer. “ That's where we began, Captain. Neither you nor the pigeons will find it again. The pigeon-house is torn down.”

“ Then,” said Baudelot, drawing his sword, “ I am released from my word. Thanks, my brave fellows ! ”

Then he took off his hat.

“ Madame,” he said very gently, “ receive the humble gratitude of the captive.”

He asked for a carriage.

“ One is already harnessed, Captain,” said one of his soldiers. “ The owner of the house tells us it was to take you to Nantes.”

Just then Baudelot noticed Hamelin bound with the fetters he himself had worn.

“ Service for service, Captain,” he said ; “ only, instead of untying your cords, allow me to cut them. No one shall wear them again.”

Then, as he saw Eleanor recovering herself, he continued :

“ Captain Hamelin, this period of civil war and spilled blood is too sad for betrothals. One can't tell whether there will be prisoners to watch in the morning or enemies to receive in the evening. Postpone your marriage, I beg of you. See, your fiancée herself wishes you to do so. My noble young lady, allow the poor Chouan to escort you back to your home at Mailly, will you not ? ”

And soon all the young Chouans galloped away, rejoicing to have delivered their Captain, and glorious in the rising sun. Poor fellows, they had so little time left, most of them, for the sunshine !

There are men who seem immortal whatever they do. Baudelot de Dairval was not killed although he did not leave Vendée for an hour. When his country was less inundated with blood he married Eleanor de Mailly, and Captain Hamelin witnessed the wedding contract.

EMILE SOUVESTRE

1806-1854

UNCLE MAURICE

THE destinies of men are like the dawn ; some rise raying out a thousand gleams, others are drowned in sombre clouds. That of my Uncle Maurice was of the unfortunate sort. He came into the world so puny that it was thought he would die ; but in spite of this prediction, that could almost be called a hope, he continued to live, suffering and deformed. His childhood was without joy. Bullied because of his weakness, mocked because of his ugliness, the little hunchback vainly tried to make friends. Everybody passed him by, pointing their finger at him.

Still his mother remained to him, and it was to her that the boy brought all the love that was scorned elsewhere. Happy in this refuge, he reached the age when a man takes his place in life, and he had to be content with a position disdained by his companions. His scholarship should have opened all careers to him ; he became receiver at one of the little city toll-gates. Enclosed in this dwelling-space of a few feet he had no other distraction, between his calculations and his entries, than reading and visits from his mother. On fine summer days she came to work at the door of the hut, in the shadow of the vines planted by Maurice. Even when she was silent, her presence was a solace to the hunchback. He heard the click of her long knitting-needles ; he saw her sweet, sad profile, recalling so many ordeals bravely supported ; and from time to time he could touch the bent shoulders with a caressing hand and exchange a smile.

This consolation was soon taken away from him. His old mother fell ill, and at the end of a few days there was no hope for her. Maurice, desperate at being left alone on earth, gave himself up to the wildest grief. Kneeling down by the bed of the dying woman, he called to her in the most tender way, and pressed her in his arms, as if he were struggling to keep the life in her. His mother tried with an effort to caress him and speak to him ; but her hands were cold and her voice was gone. She could only touch her boy's forehead with her lips and sigh, before her eyes closed for ever. Some friends tried to lead Maurice

from the room, but he would not go, and leant over the motionless body on the bed.

"Dead!" he cried. "Dead, my mother! You never left me. You alone loved me. What is there left for me in the world?"

"God!" said a stifled voice.

Maurice looked around in terror. For he was alone in the room with his dead mother. Had she spoken with her last breath? He did not try to understand; but the answer he had received guided him for the rest of his life.

It was soon after the loss of his mother that I began to know him. I often went to see him at the little toll-gate. He entered into my childish games, and told me his best stories, and let me gather his flowers. Disinherited of all the graces that attract others, he was very kind to all who came to him. He was afraid to make any advances, but always eagerly welcomed a new acquaintance; and when he was mocked he submitted with a patient sweetness, and what grief he felt he never showed.

No other official was so honest, intelligent, and eager for work. But the men who could have helped him to a better position were dismayed by his deformity. Deprived of protectors, he saw his merits go always unrecognised. His superiors thought that they showed him favour enough in allowing him to keep the humble job by which he lived. He dwelt in a suburb, in an old house divided into tenements and peopled by workmen as poor as he was, but less lonely. Only one of his neighbours lived alone in a little attic, where the wind and the rain came through the roof. She was a young girl, pale, silent, without beauty, and with little besides her patient poverty to recommend her. She was never seen to speak to another woman, and no song ever cheered her garret. Wrapped in a long shabby cloak, like a kind of shroud, she worked without interest and without distraction. Her look of weariness touched Uncle Maurice. He tried to get into conversation with her. She answered in a friendly way, but very briefly. It was easy to see that her loneliness and her silent life were more pleasing to her than the friendly services of the hunchback. So he understood it and became silent.

But Toinette's needle was scarcely able to feed her, and at last she could get no work. Maurice learnt that the girl was starving, and that the shop-keepers refused to allow her to buy things on credit. He at once went to the tradesmen and arranged to pay them secretly

for everything Toinette had from them. Things went on thus for some months ; the young needle-woman continued without work, and became at last alarmed at the debts she had run up with the shopkeepers. She went to them to see if she could come to some arrangement, and in the explanation that followed she learnt what had been done for her. Her first action was to hasten to Uncle Maurice and thank him on her knees for his goodness. Her habitual coldness gave way to an inexpressible flow of feeling ; it seemed that gratitude had melted the ice over her numbed heart.

Freed from the embarrassment of his secret work of friendship, the little hunchback was able to carry on his good work openly and with more effect. For Toinette became to him a sister, whom he had the right to care for and watch over. It was the first time, since the death of his mother, that any one had come into his life. The girl received his services with a sort of reserved emotion. All the efforts of Maurice could not dissipate her deep sadness. She appeared touched by his kindness ; she thanked him at times with much feeling ; but there all intimate confidences stopped. Leaning over her closed heart, the little hunchback could not read anything there. Indeed he was not anxious to ; giving himself up entirely to the happiness of being no longer alone, he accepted Toinette as her long troubles had made her ; he loved her thus, and wished for no more than to be with her.

Insensibly this idea occupied his mind until it effaced all others. The girl was, like himself, without relations ; habit had softened in her sight the ugliness of the little man ; she seemed to look at him with pitying affection. What more could she expect ? Till then, the hope of winning a companion for life had been repressed by Maurice as a dream ; but chance seemed to have so worked as to make a reality of it. After many hesitations he grew bold and decided to speak to her.

It was in the evening ; the little hunchback, trembling with emotion, went to the garret. As he entered, he seemed to hear a strange voice pronouncing the name of the girl. He pushed the door open eagerly, and saw Toinette weeping and leaning on the shoulder of a young man in the dress of a sailor. At the sight of my uncle, she quickly recovered herself and ran to him and cried :

“ Ah, come ! come ! Look, I thought he was dead ! It is Julien, my betrothed ! ”

Maurice drew back, his knees giving way under him. He under-

stood everything in a single word. He felt as though the earth were opening beneath him, and that his heart was going to break. But then he seemed to hear the same voice that had spoken to him by the death-bed of his mother, and he pulled himself together and recovered his strength. He went part of the way with Toinette and Julien after their marriage when they set off together; and after having wished them all the happiness that had been refused to himself, he returned with a resigned soul to the old house in the suburb. There it was he ended his life, abandoned by men, but not, as he said, by his Father. Everywhere he felt the divine presence, and it consoled him for everything else. When he died, it was with a smile, and like an exile setting out for his own country. He who had comforted him in life knew how to make him the great gift of death.

ALFRED DE MUSSET

1810-1857

THE WHITE BLACKBIRD

HOW glorious but how painful it is in this world to be an exceptional blackbird! I am not a fabulous creature, and Monsieur de Buffon has described me. But, alas! I am extremely rare, and very difficult to find. Would to Heaven I were quite an impossibility!

My father and mother were two good folks, who had lived for a number of years in the depth of an old, retired garden in the Marais district of Paris. It was an exemplary household. While my mother, sitting in a thick bush, laid her eggs regularly three times a year, and brooded them while she slumbered, my father, still very neat and petulant in spite of his great age, foraged around her all the day, with patriarchal piety, and brought her fine insects which he seized delicately by the tip of the tail, so as not to disgust his wife. And when night fell, he never missed, when the weather was fine, to regale her with a song that was the delight of the neighbourhood. Never a quarrel, never a cloud, had disturbed this happy union.

Scarcely had I come into the world than, for the first time in his life, my father got in a bad humour. Though I was still only a doubtful grey, he recognised in me neither the colour nor the shape of his numerous posterity.

"There's a dirty child," he would sometimes say, looking at me crossly; "that urchin must thrust himself into all the rubbish and dirt he meets, to get so ugly and muddy!"

"Good gracious, my dear!" said my mother, always rolled in a ball in an old bowl in which she had made her nest, "don't you see it is his youth? In your young days, weren't you a charming good-for-nothing? Let our little blackbird grow bigger, and you will see how handsome he is. He is one of the best I have ever laid."

But while taking my part, my mother was under no delusion. She saw my fatal plumage shoot, and it seemed to her a monstrosity.

But she did as do all mothers, who like their children for the very thing in which nature has ill-treated them, as though it were their fault or as though they fought in advance against the injustice that must fall on their offspring.

When the time came for my first moult, my father looked at me very attentively and became quite pensive. While my feathers were still coming out, he treated me pretty kindly, and even gave me feeding paste, when he saw me shivering almost naked in a corner. But as soon as my poor, chill winglets began to be re-covered with down, he grew so angry at each white feather he saw, that I feared he would keep plucking me for the rest of my days. Alas ! I had no mirror ; I was unaware of the reason of his fury, and I asked myself why the best of fathers was so savage towards me.

One day a ray of sunshine and my new plumes made me, in spite of myself, joyful of heart. As I fluttered between the trees I began, for my misfortune, to sing. At the first note he heard, my father leaped in the air like a rocket.

"What is that I hear there ?" he cried. "Is that how a black-bird whistles ? Is that how I whistle ? Is it whistling ?"

And swooping down close to my mother with a most terrible look :

"Unhappy woman !" he said. "What is this that has been laid in your nest ?"

At these words my indignant mother rushed from her bowl, not without hurting her foot. She wished to speak, but her sobs suffocated her ; she fell to earth half-fainting. I saw her about to expire. Frightened and trembling with terror, I flung myself at my father's knees.

"Oh ! my father," I said to him, "if I whistle wrong, if I am badly feathered, do not let my mother be punished for it. Is it her fault if nature has refused me a voice like yours ? Is it her fault if I have not your fine yellow beak and your handsome black coat in the French fashion, that gives you the air of a churchwarden about to swallow an omelette ? If heaven has made a monster of me, and if some one must suffer for it, let me at least be the only unhappy one !"

"That is not the question," said my father. "What is the meaning of the absurd manner in which you permit yourself to whistle ? Who taught you to whistle thus against all the customs and all the rules ?"

"Alas, sir," I humbly replied, "I have whistled as well as I could, feeling gay because it was fine weather, and perhaps because I had eaten too many flies."

"No one whistles that way in my family," said my father, quite beside himself. "For ages we have whistled from father to son, and learn that when I make my voice heard at evening, there is an old gentleman on the first floor, and a shop-girl in the attic, who open their windows to listen to me. Isn't it enough I have before my eyes the frightful colour of your stupid feathers that give you a powdered look like a clown at a fair? If I wasn't the most peaceful of blackbirds, I would have plucked you naked a hundred times, neither more nor less, like a pullet in a farmyard ready for the spit!"

"Very well," I cried, revolted by my father's injustice, "if this is how things stand, sir, never mind! I will disappear from your sight. I will free you from the presence of this unhappy white tail, by which you pull me all day long. I will depart, sir. There will be quite enough children to console you in your old age, since my mother lays three times a year. Far from you I shall hide my misery, and perhaps," I added sobbing, "perhaps I shall find in the neighbouring kitchen garden, or in the gutters, some worms or some spiders to maintain my mournful life."

"As you like," said my papa, far from melting at this oration. "So long as I never see you again. You are not my son. You are not a blackbird."

"What am I then, sir, if you please?"

"I know nothing about it. But you are not a blackbird."

After these terrifying words my father went away with slow steps. My mother rose up sadly, and limped to finish weeping in her bowl. For myself, confused and desolate, I flew away as best I could, and went, as I had announced, to perch on the gutter of a neighbouring house.

II

My father had the inhumanity to leave me for several days in this mortifying situation. With all his violence, he had a kind heart, and by the side glances he gave me, I saw he would have liked to pardon and recall me. My mother, above all, continually raised her eyes to me with tender looks, and even risked at times sending me a plaintive cry. But my horrible white feathers inspired them, in spite of

themselves, with a repugnance and affright for which I clearly saw there was no remedy.

"I am not a blackbird," I repeated to myself; and indeed, while washing in the morning and mirroring myself in the water of the gutter, I saw only too clearly how little I resembled my family. "Oh, heavens!" I cried. "Teach me then what I am!"

One night it was raining in torrents, and I was about to fall asleep, worn out with hunger and grief, when I saw a bird perching by me, wetter, paler, and thinner than I should have thought it possible to be. He was just about my colour, as far as I could judge through the rain that flooded us; he scarcely had on his body enough feathers to clothe a sparrow, and yet he was bigger than I. He seemed to me at first a very poor, beggarly creature, but he preserved, in spite of the storm that beat on his almost bald forehead, an air of haughtiness that charmed me. Modestly I made him a deep bow, which he answered by a peck that almost threw me into the gutter. Seeing me scratch my ear and withdraw without trying to reply to him in his own language:

"Who are you?" he asked in a voice as hoarse as his head was bald.

"Alas, my lord!" I answered (fearing another thrust), "I do not know. I thought I was a blackbird, but I have been convinced that I am not."

The singularity of my reply and my air of sincerity interested him. He came closer and got me to relate my story, which I did with all the sadness and all the humility that became my position and the frightful weather.

"If you were a pigeon like me," he said, when I had done, "the silly nonsense you worry over would not trouble you for a moment. We pigeons travel; that is our life, and we have our love affairs, but I do not know who is my father. To cleave the air, to sweep through space, to see mountains and plains far below us, to breathe the azure of the heavens, to dart like an arrow at a goal that never escapes us—that is our pleasure and our existence. I can travel farther in one day than a man can in ten!"

"On my word, sir," I said, growing bolder, "you are a gipsy bird!"

"That's another matter that doesn't trouble me," he continued. "I have no country. I know only three things—travel, my wife, my little ones. Where my wife is, there is my motherland."

"But what is that hanging from your neck? It looks like an old bit of curl paper."

"These are papers of importance," he said, bristling up. "I am going to Brussels this trip, and taking to a banker there some news that will knock Government stock down one franc seventy-eight centimes!"

"Good heavens!" I cried, "what a fine life you lead, and Brussels, I am sure, must be a town worth seeing! Could you not take me with you? Since I am not a blackbird, I may be a racing pigeon."

"If you were one," he answered, "you would have returned the peck I gave you just now."

"Very well, sir, I will return it. Don't let us get on bad terms over such a little thing. Look! Morning is breaking and the weather clearing up. In pity, let me come with you. I am abandoned. I have nothing left in the world. If you refuse me, nothing remains but to drown myself in this gutter."

"Very well," he said. "Let us be off! Follow me if you can."

I threw a last glance on the garden where my mother was sleeping. A tear flowed from my eye; the wind and the rain bore it away. I opened my wings, and I departed.

III

My wings, I have said, were still not very strong. While my leader went like the wind, I panted along by his side. I kept up for some time, but soon I had such a fit of giddiness that I felt near to swooning.

"Will it take us much longer?" I asked in a weak voice.

"No," he replied, "we are at Bourget. We have only another sixty leagues to do."

I tried to pluck up courage, not wishing to look like a half-drowned chicken, and I flew for another quarter of an hour, but then I was quite done up.

"Sir," I again stammered out, "couldn't we stop a moment? I am tormented with thirst, and if we perched on a tree——"

"Go to the devil! You are only a blackbird," said the pigeon angrily.

And without deigning to turn his head, he kept on his mad flight. As for me, dazed and unable to see, I fell into a wheat-field. I do

not know how long the swoon lasted. When I recovered consciousness, the first thing that came into my head were the last words of the pigeon. "You are only a blackbird," he had said to me. "Oh, my dear parents," I thought, "you must, therefore, have been mistaken. I will return home. You will recognise in me your true and legitimate child, and let me take my place again in the nice little heap of leaves under my mother's bowl."

I made an effort to rise ; but the fatigue of the flight, and the pain I felt from my fall, paralysed my limbs. Scarcely had I got on my feet, when I was overcome with weakness, and fell back on my side. The frightful thought of death had already come into my mind, when, through the cornflowers and the poppies, I saw two charming persons coming towards me on tiptoe. One was a pretty little magpie hen, admirably dappled, and extremely coquettish ; the other was a turtle-dove with rose-coloured plumage. The dove stopped a few steps away with a fine air of modesty and compassion for my misfortune, but the magpie came skipping up in the most delightful way in the world.

"Good heavens ! poor child ! what are you doing there ? " she asked me in a playful, silvery voice.

"Alas ! Madame the Marquise," I replied, for I saw at once she was a noble lady. "I am a poor wretch of a traveller whose coachman has left him on the road, and I am on the way to die of hunger."

"By our Lady ! What is that you say ? " she exclaimed.

And she at once began to flutter here and there on the bushes that surrounded us, coming and going from one side to the other, bringing me a quantity of berries and fruits, which she placed in a little heap by me, going on with her questions all the time.

"But who are you ? Where do you come from ? What an extraordinary adventure ! Where are you going ? Travelling alone, and so young ! Just out of your first moult ! What are your parents doing ? Where are they ? How did they let you go in this condition ? It is enough to raise all the feathers on one's head ! "

While she was speaking, I raised myself a little on one side, and ate with a good appetite. The turtle-dove stood still, looking at me always with an eye of pity. However, she remarked that I turned my head with a languishing air and she saw that I was thirsty. Of the rain that fell in the night a drop still remained on a leaf of pimpernel. She timidly gathered this drop of water in her beak, and brought it

to me cool and fresh. Certainly if I had not been very unwell, so reserved a hen would not have allowed herself such a bold act.

At that time I did not know what love was, but my heart beat violently. Divided between two diverse emotions, I was overcome by an inexplicable charm. My cup-bearer was so sweet and tender, and my serving-maid so gay and bright, that I should have liked to continue eating thus for all eternity. Unhappily, there is a limit even to the appetite of a convalescent. The meal over and my strength recovered, I satisfied the curiosity of the little magpie, and told her my misfortunes with as much sincerity as I had related them the night before to the pigeon. The magpie listened to me with more attention than might have been expected from her, and the turtle-dove gave me some charming marks of her depth of feeling. But when I touched on the capital point that brought about my trouble, that is to say my ignorance of what sort of bird I was :

"Are you jesting?" cried the magpie. "You a blackbird! You a pigeon! For shame! You are a magpie, my dear boy, and a very pretty magpie," she added, giving me a flick of her wing that was like a tap from a fan.

"But, Madame," I replied, "it seems to me that for a magpie, I am of such a colour, if you will pardon me——"

"A Russian magpie, my dear, you are a Russian magpie! Don't you know that they are all white? Poor boy, what innocence!"

"But, Madame," I continued, "how could I be a Russian magpie, born in the Marais in Paris in an old broken bowl?"

"Ah! the dear child! You belong to the invasion of 1814, my dear. Do you think that you are the only one? Trust in me and do not bother. I want to lead you away at once, and show you the loveliest things on earth."

"Where, Madame, please?"

"In my green palace, my darling. You will see the life we lead there. After you have been a magpie for a quarter of an hour, you will not want to hear about anything else. A hundred of us are there—none of the coarse village magpies that go begging on the highways—but all noble and belonging to good society, slim, smart, and no bigger than a fist. None of us has more or less than seven black marks and five white marks. It is an unchangeable thing, and we scorn the rest of the world. It is true you want the black marks, but the fact that you are a Russian will suffice to get you admitted.

"Our life is made up of two things—chatter and dress. From morn till noon we get ourselves up, and from noon to night we prattle. Each of us perches on the highest and the oldest tree possible. In the middle of the forest rises an immense oak, uninhabited, alas! It was the dwelling-place of the late King Pie X., and there we go in pilgrimage, sighing very deeply. But except for this slight grief, we pass the time admirably. Our ladies are no more prudish than our husbands are jealous, but our pleasures are pure and honest because our hearts are as noble as our language is free and gay. In haughtiness we have no equal, and if a jay or some other cad chances to mingle with us, we pluck him without pity.

"Yet we are the best souls in the world; and the sparrows, tom-tits, and goldfinches that live in the undergrowth, always find us ready to help them and feed them, and defend them. Nowhere is there more chatter than among us, and nowhere less backbiting. We do not lack some old pious pies who pass the whole day in prayer, but the giddiest of our young gossips can pass by the severest old dowager without fearing a peck. In a word, we live for pleasure, honour, chatter, glory, and dress!"

"How attractive that all is, Madame," I replied. "I should certainly be very ill-bred if I did not obey the wishes of a lady like you. But before I have the honour to follow you, allow me, I pray, to say a word to this good turtle-dove here. Fair lady," I continued, turning to the turtle-dove, "speak to me frankly, I beg you. Do you think I am truly a Russian magpie?" At this question the turtle-dove lowered her head and became both pale and red, like the ribbons of Lolotte.

"But, sir," she said, "I do not know if I can——"

"Speak," I cried, "in the name of heaven! I had no intention of offending you. Quite the contrary. You both seem to me so charming that I swear on the spot to offer my heart and my foot to either of you who will accept them, at the very moment I know whether I am a magpie or something else. For in looking at you," I added in a whisper, "I feel I am something of a turtle-dove, and it gives me a strange feeling."

"Indeed," said the turtle-dove, with a deeper blush, "I do not know if it is the reflection of the sunlight falling on you through these poppies, but your plumage seems to have a slight tint——"

She did not dare to say more.

" Oh, what perplexity ! " I cried, " how can I know where I stand ? How can I give my heart to one of you when it is so cruelly torn apart ? Oh, Socrates, how admirable a precept, but hard to follow, you gave us when you said, ' Know thyself ! ' "

Since the day when my unhappy song had upset my father, I had made no use of my voice. In this moment it struck me I could employ it as a means to discern the truth. " Great Scott ! " I thought, " since my father put me outside the door after the first verse, it is pretty certain that the second will produce some effect on these ladies ! " So, giving a polite bow, as though asking for an indulgence by reason of the wetting I had received from the rain, I began first to whistle, then to warble, then to execute runs, and at last to sing with a full throat like a Spanish muleteer when he has got his breath.

As I sang the little magpie hen moved away from me with an air of surprise that soon became stupefaction, and then passed to a feeling of fright accompanied by profound boredom. She made circles round me like a cat round a bit of hot fat that has just burnt her, but which she still wants to taste again. Seeing the effect of my experiment, and wishing to push it to the end, the more impatience the Marquise showed, the more I sang myself hoarse. For twenty-five minutes she resisted my melodies ; at last, being unable to contain herself, she flew off with a loud noise to her palace of verdure. As for the turtle-dove, she, from the beginning, had almost fallen fast asleep.

" What an admirable effect of music ! " I thought. " Oh, Paris ! Oh, my mother's bowl ! More than ever am I bent on returning to you. "

At the moment when I started to leave, the turtle-dove opened her eyes.

" Farewell, " she said, " O pretty and wearisome stranger ! My name is Gourouli. Do not forget me ! "

" Lovely Gourouli, " I replied, " you are good and sweet and charming. I would I could live and die for you. But you are rose-coloured ; so such happiness is not for me. "

IV

The sad effects produced by my song did not fail to sadden me. " Alas ! music, alas ! poetry, " I said when I was going back to Paris, " how few are the hearts that understand you ! "

While making these reflections I struck my head against that of a

bird who was flying in an opposite direction. The shock was so unforeseen and heavy, that we both fell on the top of a tree which, by good luck, was underneath us. After recovering a little I looked at the strange bird in expectation of a quarrel. I was surprised to see that he was white. In fact he had a larger head than mine, and on the forehead a kind of tuft that gave him an air of an heroic comedian. Moreover, he carried his tail high in the air in a very magnanimous way. For the rest, he did not seem at all disposed to fight. We greeted each other civilly, and made mutual excuses, and then entered into conversation. I took the liberty of asking his name and his country.

"You do not recognise me?" he said. "I am astonished! Are you not one of us?"

"In truth, sir," I replied, "I do not know what I am. Everybody asks me the same thing. There must be a wager on the matter."

"You are joking," he said. "Your plumage suits you too well for me to pass over a brother bird. You infallibly belong to that illustrious and venerable race known as white cockatoos!"

"Faith! that is possible and it would be a great honour for me. But go on speaking as if I were not, and condescend to inform me whom I have the glory of meeting."

"I am," replied the unknown bird, "the great poet Kacatogan. I have gone on great travels, sir, on arid excursions, and cruel peregrinations. It was not yesterday that I began to rhyme, and my muse knows what misfortune is. I have hummed under Louis XVI., I have brawled for the Republic, I have nobly sung the Empire. I have discreetly praised the Restoration. I have even made an effort in these later days, and submitted myself, not without pain, to the requirements of this tasteless age. I have thrown off piquant epigrams, sublime hymns, graceful dithyrambs, pious elegies, long-haired dramas, frizzled romances, powdered farces, and bald-headed tragedies. In a word, I flatter myself with having added to the temple of the Muses some graceful festoons, some sombre battlements, and some ingenious arabesques. What can you expect? I am an old man. But I still rhyme with vigour, sir, and, such as you see me now, I was thinking out a poem of not less than six pages when you raised a bump on my forehead. Anyhow, if I can help you in any way, I am quite at your service."

"Indeed, sir, you can," I replied, "for you see me at this moment

in a great poetical difficulty. I dare not say I am a poet, far less a great poet like you," making him a bow, "but I have received from nature a gift of song that I must show whenever I feel happy or sorrowful. To tell you the whole truth, I am quite ignorant of all the rules of singing."

"I have forgotten them," said Kacatogan; "don't trouble about that."

"But a shameful thing has happened to me," I went on. "On those who hear it my voice produces pretty much the same effect as that of a certain Jean de Nivelle on . . . You know what I mean!"

"I know," said Kacatogan. "I know from experience this odd effect. The cause is mysterious, but the effect is incontestable. I have never been able to find the remedy. In younger days I was much upset when they always hissed me, but now I do not trouble about it. The dislike, I think, arises from the fact that the public reads the works of other writers and thus becomes distracted."

"I think like you, sir," I said; "but you will agree that it is hard for a person with good intentions, to see everybody run away as soon as he opens his throat. Would you mind listening to me, and giving me your frank opinion?"

"Willingly, I am all ears."

I at once began to sing, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that Kacatogan neither fled nor fell asleep. He looked at me fixedly, and from time to time he inclined his head with an air of approbation, and murmured in a flattering way. But I soon perceived he was not listening, but thinking out his poem. As I was taking breath, he suddenly interrupted me.

"At last I have found that rhyme!" he said, smiling and shaking his head. "It is the sixty thousand seven hundred and fourteenth that has come from this brain! Yet they have the impudence to say I am growing old. I must go and read it to some good friends. I must go and read it to them, and we shall see what they will say of it!"

Speaking thus he flew away, and disappeared without seeming to remember that he had met me.

Left alone and disappointed, I had nothing better to do than to profit by the remaining daylight and fly swiftly to Paris. Un-

happily I did not know the route. My flight with the pigeon had hardly been agreeable enough to leave me with a clear memory of it. So, instead of going quite straight, I turned leftwards to Bourget, and, overtaken by the night, I was obliged to seek for lodging in Morfontaine Wood. Everybody had gone to bed when I arrived. The magpies and the jays, who are the worst sleepers on earth, were wrangling on all sides. In the bushes the sparrows were squalling and scrambling over each other. By the water-side two herons gravely walked along, perched on their high stilts, in an attitude of meditation, patiently waiting for their wives. Enormous crows, half asleep, squatted heavily on the top of the highest tree, and through their noses said their evening prayers. Lower down the amorous tomtits still ran after each other in the undergrowth, while a chubby woodpecker pushed his family from behind to make them enter the hollow in a tree.

Squadrons of tree-sparrows came from the fields, dancing in the air like puffs of smoke, and flinging themselves on a sapling, which they entirely covered. The finches, the warblers, the red-breasts arranged themselves lightly on the branches like crystals on a chandelier. All round was the sound of voices, speaking with great distinctness. "Get along, my wife!" "Get along, my daughter!" "Come, my sweet!" "This way, my love!" "Here I am, my dear!" "Good-night, my darling!" "Good-bye, my friend!" "Sleep well, my children!" What a position for a bachelor to sleep in such an inn. I was tempted to join some birds of my size and beg a shelter from them. "In the night," I thought, "all birds are black; and besides, how could I harm anybody by sleeping in all politeness close to them?"

I went first to a ditch where some starlings had gathered. They were making their evening toilette with particular care, and I remarked that most of them had gilded wings and polished feet; they were the dandies of the forest. They were pretty good fellows and honoured me with no attention. But their talk was so empty, they spoke with such fatuity of their amours and trickeries, and provoked each other so much, that I could not put up with it.

I went and perched on a branch where half a dozen birds of different species stood in a row. I modestly took the last place at the end of the bough, hoping I should not be interfered with. Unfortunately, my neighbour was an old hen dove, stiff as a rusted vane. At the moment I approached, the scanty feathers covering her bones were

the object of her solicitude. She pretended to clean them ; but she was too much afraid of dragging one of them out. She merely went over them to see if any more were missing. I scarcely touched her with the tip of the wing, but she rose up majestically.

“ What are you doing, sir ? ” she said, tightening her beak with quite a British prudence. And striking out with her elbow, she threw me down with a vigour that would have done honour to a porter.

I fell in the heather where a plump wood-hen was sleeping. My mother herself, in her bowl, had not such an air of beatitude. She was so round, so spread out, so well settled on her triple stomach, that you would have taken her for a pie of which the crust had been eaten. I crept furtively close to her. “ She will not awake,” I said, “ and in any case such a motherly creature will not be very angry.” She was not. Half opening her eyes, she said with a light sigh, “ You worry me, my little one. Go away.”

At the same instant I heard some one calling me. It was some thrushes, who, from the top of a mountain ash, motioned to me to come to them. “ There at last are some good souls ! ” I thought. They were all hens, and they made place for me laughing like mad things, and I thrust myself eagerly in their feathery group, like a love-letter in a muff. But it was not long before I discerned that these ladies had eaten more grapes than was reasonable. They could scarcely hold on to the branches, and their low jests, their claps of laughter, and their loose songs compelled me to leave.

I began to despair, and was going to sleep in a solitary corner, when a nightingale broke into song. Everybody remained silent. Alas ! how pure his voice was. He gave sweetness even to sorrow ! Far from troubling the slumber of any one, his harmonies seemed like a lullaby. No one thought of making him keep silent ; nobody thought it wrong for him to sing his song at such an hour ; his father did not beat him ; his friends did not fly from him !

“ I alone,” I cried, “ am forbidden to be happy ! Flee from this cruel world ! Better to seek a path through the shadows at the risk of being swallowed by some owl, than let myself be lacerated by the sight of other persons’ happiness ! ”

In this vein I set out, and for some hours wandered at hazard. In the first glow of dawn I perceived the towers of Notre Dame. In the twinkling of an eye I reached Paris, and it was not long before I saw our garden. Quicker than lightning I flew there. Alas, it was

empty ! I called my parents in vain. The tree where my father perched, the bush of my mother, the beloved bowl—all had disappeared. The axe had destroyed everything. In place of the avenue of foliage where I was born, there were only a hundred faggots of firewood.

VI

I sought my parents in all the neighbouring gardens ; but it was trouble lost. They had no doubt fled for shelter to some distant part of the town, and I could never get any news of them. Overcome with frightful sadness, I perched on the gutter from which the anger of my father had first exiled me. There I spent days and nights deploring my existence. I did not sleep ; I scarcely ate ; I was nearly dying of grief.

" Thus," I said aloud, " I am not a blackbird, since my father pulled my feathers out ; nor a pigeon, since I tumbled on the way when I wanted to go to Belgium ; nor a Russian magpie, since the little Marquise stopped up her ears as soon as I opened my mouth ; nor a turtle-dove, since Gourouli, the good Gourouli herself, snored like a monk when I sang ; nor a parrot, since Kacatogan would not deign to listen to me ; nor any sort of bird whatever, since at Morfontaine they let me sleep all alone. Yet I have feathers on my body. Here are my feet and here are my wings. I am not a monster—witness Gourouli and the little Marquise herself, who found me to their liking. By what inexplicable mystery are these wings and feathers and feet formed into a mass to which nobody can give a name ? Should I not be by chance——"

I was interrupted by two housewives quarrelling in the street.

" Bless me ! " said one of them, " if you bring it off, I will make you a present of a white blackbird ! "

" Just heavens ! " I cried. " There I am ! Oh, Providence ! I am the son of a blackbird, and I am white ; I am a white blackbird ! "

I must admit that this discovery modified many of my ideas. Instead of continuing my lamentations, I began to bridle up and stalk proudly along the gutter, regarding everything with a victorious air.

" It is something," I said to myself, " to be a white blackbird. You don't find that by following a donkey. How vain it was for me to grieve that I could not meet others like me ! It is the fate of genius. I wished to flee the world but I must astonish it. Since I am this

unparalleled bird, whose existence vulgar souls deny, I am in duty bound to carry myself as such, neither more nor less than like a Phoenix, and condemn the rest of the feathered creatures. I must buy the memoirs of Alfieri and the poems of Lord Byron ; this substantial nourishment will inspire me with a noble pride, without counting that which God has already given me. Yes, I want to add, if it can be, to the prestige of my birth. Nature has made me rare ; I will make myself mysterious. It shall be a favour, a glory even to see me. In fact," I whispered, " if I were to show myself frankly for money ?

" Shame ! What an unworthy thought ! I want to write a poem like Kacatogan, not in one chant, but in twenty-four, like all the great men. No ! It is not enough. There shall be forty-eight chants, with notes and an appendix. The universe must learn that I exist. I shall not fail, in my poem, to deplore my isolation ; but I will do so in such a way that the happiest people will envy me. Since heaven has refused me a mate, I will say terrible things about the wives of others. I will prove that everything is sour, except the grapes I eat. The nightingales must look to themselves. I shall demonstrate that, as surely as two and two make four, their sorrowful songs make one sick, and their stuff is worth nothing. I must find an enterprising publisher of the new school. I first want to create a strong literary position. I mean to have round me a court composed, not only of journalists, but of veritable men of letters, and even of literary women. I shall write a part for Madame Rachel, and, if she will not play it, I will announce, with the sound of trumpets, that her talent is much inferior to that of an old provincial actress. I shall go to Venice, and in the midst of this enchanted city I shall rent on the Grand Canal the fine palace of Mocenigo that costs four pounds and fivepence a day.

" There I shall draw inspiration from the memories the author of *Lara* must have left behind him. From the depth of my solitude I will flood the world with a deluge of poems in Spenserian stanzas, in which I will comfort my great soul. I will make all the tomtits sigh, all the turtle-doves croon, all the geese shall melt in tears, and the old owls shall shriek. But as regards my person, I shall show myself inexorable and inaccessible to love. In vain will they urge and implore me to take pity on the unhappy creatures carried away by my sublime chants. To all that I shall answer, ' Bah ! ' Oh, excess of glory ! My manuscripts shall sell for their weight in gold, my books shall cross

the seas ; fame, fortune shall follow me everywhere. Alone I shall seem indifferent to the murmurs of the crowd that encircles me. In a word, I shall be a perfect white blackbird, a veritable eccentric poet, feasted, looked after, admired, envied, but quite discontented and intolerable."

VII

It took me no more than six weeks to produce my first work. It was, as I had promised myself, a poem in forty-eight chants. There were certainly some roughnesses in it, owing to the prodigious fecundity with which it had been written ; but I thought that the public of our day, accustomed to the fine literature that is printed at the bottom of newspapers, would not reproach me with them.

I had a success worthy of myself ; that is to say, without a parallel. The subject of my work was myself. In this I conformed to the fashion of the age. I related my past sufferings with a charming fatuity ; I acquainted the reader with a thousand domestic details of the most piquant interest. The description of my mother's bowl filled no less than fourteen chants. I had counted in it the ridges, the holes, the bosses, the bright spots, the splinters, the nails, the stains, the diverse tints, the reflections. I showed the inside, the outside, the edges, the bottom, the sides, the inclined planes. Then passing to the contents, I had studied the blades of grass, the straws, the dry leaves, the bits of wood, the grit, the drops of water, the remains of flies, the feet of broken chafers that occurred there. It was a ravishing description. But don't think I had it printed in an unbroken length. There are impertinent readers who would have skipped it. I skilfully cut it into passages, which I larded into the story so that nothing of it was lost ; and in such a way that, at the most interesting and dramatic moment, there suddenly popped up fifteen pages about the bowl. There you have, I think, one of the great secrets of art, and as I am not avaricious, let any one profit by it who cares.

The whole of Europe was stirred by the appearance of my book. She devoured the intimate revelations that I deigned to communicate. How could it have been otherwise ? Not only did I enumerate all the facts about myself, but I gave the public a complete picture of all the musings that had come into my head since I was two months of age. I had even interposed, in the finest passage, an ode composed in my egg-shell. Of course, I did not neglect to treat by the way the

great subject with which so many people are preoccupied ; that is to say, the future of humanity. This problem struck me as interesting, and in a moment of leisure I sketched out a solution that generally passed as satisfactory.

Every day I received compliments in verse, letters of felicitation, and nameless declarations of love. As for visits, I rigorously followed the plan I had formed. My door was shut to everybody. I could not, however, refuse to receive two foreigners who announced themselves my relatives. One was a blackbird from Senegal ; the other a blackbird from China.

" Ah ! sir," they said, almost stifling me in their embrace, " what a great blackbird you are ! How well you have depicted, in your immortal poem, the profound sufferings of unrecognized genius ! If we had not been already as much misunderstood as possible, we should have become so after reading you. How we sympathise with your griefs, with your sublime scorn of the vulgar herd ! We also, sir, understand from our own experience the secret sorrows you have sung. Here are two sonnets we have written, which we beg you to accept."

" Here is also," added the Chinaman, " the melody my wife has composed on some verses of your preface. The intention of the author is wonderfully rendered by the music."

" Gentlemen," I said to them, " so far as I can judge, you seem to me endowed with great hearts and enlightened minds. But pardon me for asking you a question. What is the ground for your melancholy ? "

" Look how I am made, sir," answered the native of Senegal. " It is true that my plumage is pleasant to look at, and that I am clothed in the beautiful green colour that is seen shining on drakes. But my beak is too short, and my feet are too long. And look at the tail I have been rigged out in ! It is much longer than my body. Isn't that enough to make you sell yourself to the devil ? "

" And my misfortune," said the Chinaman, " is still harder to bear. The tail of my companion sweeps the road, but the naughty boys point their fingers at me because I have no tail at all ! "

" Gentlemen," I said, " I am sorry for you with all my soul. It is always troublesome to have too much or too little of anything. But permit me to tell you that in the Zoological Gardens there are several persons who resemble you, and yet have bided there a long time con-

fortably stuffed, in life-like attitudes. Just as it is not sufficient for a woman writer to be a wanton in order to write a fine book, so it is not enough for a blackbird to be discontented in order to be a genius. I am the only one of my species, and I am sorry for it. Perhaps I am mistaken, but it is my privilege. I am white, gentlemen ; become so and then you will know what you can say."

VIII

In spite of the resolution I had taken and the calmness I affected, I was not happy. Glorious as my isolation was, it was none the less painful. I could not think without terror of the necessity in which I was placed of passing my entire life in lonely splendour. The return of springtime, in particular, caused me a mortal uneasiness, and I began to fall again into a deep melancholy, when an unforeseen circumstance changed the course of my existence. It is needless to say that my writings had crossed the Channel, and that the English scrambled after them. The English rush after everything, except that which they understand. One day I received from London a letter from a young blackbird hen.

"I have read your poem," she said to me, "and the admiration I feel has made me resolve to offer you my hand and my person. God has created us for each other ! I am like you—I am a little white blackbird !"

You will easily guess my surprise and my joy. "A white blackbird hen !" I said to myself. "Is it possible ? So I am no more alone on this earth !" I hastened to reply to the unknown beauty, and I did it in a way that showed how much her proposal pleased me. I urged her to come to Paris, or to permit me to fly to her. She replied that she would prefer to come to me, because her parents annoyed her, that she would put her affairs in order, and that I should soon see her. She came, in fact, a few days afterwards. Oh, joy ! she was the prettiest little blackbird in the world, and even whiter than myself.

"Ah ! miss," I cried, "or rather madame, for I regard you henceforward as my legitimate spouse, is it believable that so charming a creature should be found on earth without fame telling me of her existence ! Blessed be my misfortune and the pecks my father gave me, since heaven has reserved for me so unhopd-for a consolation ! Unto this day I thought I was condemned to an eternal

solitude, and speaking to you frankly, it was a heavy burden to bear. But I feel, in looking at you, all the qualities of a father of a family. Accept my hand without delay. Let us marry in the English fashion, without ceremony, and set out for a honeymoon in Switzerland."

"I don't look at it in that way," answered the young hen. "I want our wedding to be a magnificent affair, and that all the black-birds of France of good breeding should solemnly assemble at it. Persons such as we owe something to our own glory, and cannot marry like cats in a gutter. I have brought a supply of bank-notes. Send out your invitations, go and see your tradespeople, and do not be stingy about the refreshments."

I blindly obeyed the orders of my bride. Our marriage was an affair of overwhelming luxury. Ten thousand flies were eaten at it, and we received a nuptial benediction from a reverend father Cormorant, who was archbishop *in partibus*. A superb ball brought the day to a close; nothing was wanting to my happiness.

The more I learnt of the character of my charming wife the more my love for her increased. She united in her little person all the graces of soul and body. She was only a little prudish, but I attributed that to the influence of the English fog in which she had lived, and I did not doubt that the climate of France would soon remove this slight cloud.

One thing that troubled me more seriously was a sort of mystery with which she sometimes surrounded herself in a strange rigour. She locked herself in with her maids, and spent hours, so she pretended, in making her toilet. Husbands do not like this sort of thing. Twenty times have I knocked at my wife's room without her opening the door to me. That cruelly upset me. One day I insisted, in such anger, that she was obliged to give way and let me in, not without bitterly complaining of my importunity. I noticed, in entering, a big bottle full of a kind of paste made of flour and whitening. I asked my wife what she used the mixture for. She said it was a remedy for chilblains, from which she was suffering.

This remedy seemed to me rather suspicious, but how could I mistrust a creature so sweet and so good, who had given herself to me with so much enthusiasm and so perfect a sincerity? At first I did not know that my beloved was a writer. After some time she admitted she was, and even showed me a novel in which she had imitated both Walter Scott and Scarron. So delightful a surprise gave me much pleasure. I saw that I not only possessed an incomparable beauty,

but that the intellect of my wife was worthy of my genius. From that moment we worked together. While I composed my poems, she scribbled away on reams of paper. I recited my verses aloud to her, but that did not prevent her from going on writing at the same time. She produced her novels with almost as much facility as I produced my poems, choosing always the most dramatic subjects—parricides, rapes, murders, and even swindling tricks; always taking care to attack the Government and to preach the gospel of the emancipation of hen blackbirds. In a word, no effort was painful to her mind, no feat of art to her sense of modesty. She never altered a line or thought out a plan before she started to write. She was the type of the woman of letters.

One day, as she was working with an unusual ardour, I perceived she was perspiring very freely, and I was astonished to see at the same time a large black spot on her back.

“ Good heavens ! ” I cried. “ What is this ? Are you unwell ? ” She seemed at first a little frightened, and even dumbfounded, but her large experience of the world soon enabled her to recover her admirable self-control. She said to me that it was a blot of ink and that she was given to flinging the ink about in her moments of inspiration.

“ Does my wife dye ? ” I asked myself. The thought prevented me from sleeping. The bottle of paste came back to my mind. “ Oh, heavens ! ” I cried, “ what a suspicion. Can this heavenly creature be a painted thing, got up to deceive me ? When I thought I was pressing to my heart the sister of my soul, the privileged being created for me alone, was I only marrying flour and whitening ? ”

Pursued by this horrible doubt, I formed a plan to free myself from it. I bought a barometer, and eagerly watched for the coming of a rainy day. I wanted to take my wife into the country in doubtful weather, and see what a washing in the rain would do for her. But we were in mid-July ; the fine weather continued in a frightful manner.

The appearance of happiness and the habit of writing had strongly excited my feelings. Naïve as I was, it sometimes happened, while I was working, that my emotion overcame me, and I began to weep while searching for a rhyme. My wife loved these rare occasions. Every masculine weakness is a delight to feminine pride. One night, when I was polishing a correction, after the precept of Boileau, it happened that my heart opened.

“ Oh, you ! ” I said to my dear little hen, “ you, the only one and

the most beloved ! You, without whom life is a dream ! You who can change the universe for me with a look, a smile, do you know how much I adore you ? A little study and attention will easily enable me to find words for a commonplace idea already worn out by other poets. Where shall I ever find words to express that which your beauty inspires me with ? Before you came to me my isolation was that of an exiled orphan. To-day it is that of a king. In this little feverish brain, in which a useless thought is fermenting, there can be nothing, my angel, my beautiful one, that does not belong to you. Oh, that my genius was a pearl and you were Cleopatra ! ”

In raving thus I wept on my wife and she visibly lost colour. At each tear that fell from my eyes a feather appeared, not even black, but of an old rusty brown tint. After some minutes of deep emotion, I found myself face to face with an unwhitened bird, identically similar to the most ordinary and commonplace of blackbirds.

What could I do ? What could I say ? All reproach was useless. I could in truth have considered the case as an annulled contract and have set aside my marriage. But how could I publish my shame ? Was not my misfortune enough in itself ? Taking my courage in both claws, I resolved to leave the world, to abandon literature and fly to a wilderness, if it were possible, and avoid for ever the face of a living creature.

IX

Thereupon I flew away, always weeping ; and the wind, which is the luck of birds, carried me to the wood of Morfontaine. On this occasion everybody was abed. “ What a marriage ! ” I said to myself. “ What a freak ! It was certainly with a good intention that the poor child whitened herself, but all the same she is none the less a rusty brown, and I am none the less the most miserable creature on earth ! ”

The nightingale was still singing. Alone, in the depths of night, he enjoyed with a full heart the gift of God that made him so superior to poets, and gave his thoughts freely to the silence that surrounded him. I could not resist the temptation to go up and speak to him.

“ Oh, how happy you are ! ” I said to him. “ Not only can you sing as much as you like, with everybody listening to you, but you have a wife and children, your nest, your friends, a good pillow of moss, the full moon, and no newspapers. Rubini and Rossini are nothing beside you. I have also sung, sir, and it was pitiable. I

ranged my words in order of battle, like Prussian soldiers, and I composed rubbish, while you were singing amid the leaves. Is the source of your inspiration a secret ? ”

“ Not at all,” said the nightingale ; “ but it is not what you think. My wife bores me, and I do not love her. I am in love with the rose. I sing till I am hoarse all the night for her, but she sleeps on and does not hear me. Her chalice is closed at the present time. She is cradling an old beetle in it ; but to-morrow morning, when I creep back to my bed, worn out with suffering and fatigue, it is then that she will open her petals for a bee that eats her heart out.”

CAMILLE

ALFRED DE MUSSET

I

THE Chevalier des Arcis was a cavalry officer who, having quitted the service in 1760, while still young, retired to a country house near Mans. Shortly after, he married the daughter of a retired merchant who lived in the neighbourhood, and this marriage appeared for a time to be an exceedingly happy one. Cécile's relatives were worthy folk who, enriched by means of hard work, were now, in their latter years, enjoying a continual Sunday. The Chevalier, weary of the artificial manners of Versailles, entered gladly into their simple pleasures. Cécile had an excellent uncle, named Giraud, who had been a master-bricklayer, but had risen by degrees to the position of architect, and now owned considerable property. The Chevalier's house (which was named Chardonneux) was much to Giraud's taste, and he was there a frequent and ever-welcome visitor.

By and by a lovely little girl was born to the Chevalier and Cécile, and great at first was the jubilation of the parents. But a painful shock was in store for them. They soon made the terrible discovery that their little Camille was deaf, and, consequently, also dumb !

II

The mother's first thought was of cure, but this hope was reluctantly abandoned ; no cure could be found. At the time of which we are writing, there existed a pitiless prejudice against those poor creatures whom we style *deaf mutes*. A few noble spirits, it is true, had protested against this barbarity. A Spanish monk of the sixteenth century was the first to devise means of teaching the dumb to speak without words—a thing until then deemed impossible. His example had been followed at different times in Italy, England, and France, by Bonnet, Wallis, Bulwer, and Van Helmont, and a little good had been done here and there. Still, however, even at Paris, deaf mutes

were generally regarded as beings set apart, marked with the brand of Divine displeasure. Deprived of speech, the power of thought was denied them, and they inspired more horror than pity.

A dark shadow crept over the happiness of Camille's parents. A sudden, silent estrangement—worse than divorce, crueller than death—grew up between them. For the mother passionately loved her afflicted child, while the Chevalier, despite all the efforts prompted by his kind heart, could not overcome the repugnance with which her affliction affected him.

The mother spoke to her child by signs, and she alone could make herself understood. Every other inmate of the house, even her father, was a stranger to Camille. The mother of Madame des Arcis—a woman of no tact—never ceased to deplore loudly the misfortune that had befallen her daughter and son-in-law. “Better that she had never been born!” she exclaimed one day.

“What would you have done, then, had *I* been thus?” asked Cécile indignantly.

To Uncle Giraud his great-niece's dumbness seemed no such tremendous misfortune. “I have had,” said he, “such a talkative wife that I regard everything else as a less evil. This little woman will never speak or hear bad words, never aggravate the whole household by humming opera airs, will never quarrel, never awake when her husband coughs, or rise early to look after his workmen. She will see clearly, for the deaf have good eyes. She will be pretty and intelligent, and make no noise. Were I young, I would like to marry her; being old, I will adopt her as my daughter whenever you are tired of her.”

For a moment the sad parents were cheered by Uncle Giraud's bright talk. But the cloud soon redescended upon them.

III

In course of time the little girl grew into a big one. Nature completed successfully, but faithfully, her task. The Chevalier's feelings towards Camille had, unfortunately, undergone no change. Her mother still watched over her tenderly, and never left her, observing anxiously her slightest actions, her every sign of interest in life.

When Camille's young friends were of an age to receive the first instructions of a governess, the poor child began to realise the difference

between herself and others. The child of a neighbour had a severe governess. Camille, who was present one day at a spelling-lesson, regarded her little comrade with surprise, following her efforts with her eyes, seeking, as it were, to aid her, and crying when she was scolded. Especially were the music-lessons puzzling to Camille.

The evening prayers, which the neighbour used regularly with her children, were another enigma for the girl. She knelt with her friends, and joined her hands without knowing wherefore. The Chevalier considered this a profanation ; not so his wife. As Camille advanced in age, she became possessed of a passion—as it were by a holy instinct—for the churches which she beheld. “ When I was a child I saw not God, I saw only the sky,” is the saying of a deaf mute. A religious procession, a coarse, gaudily bedizened image of the Virgin, a choir boy in a shabby surplice, whose voice was all unheard by Camille—who knows what simple means will serve to raise the eyes of a child ? And what matters it, so long as the eyes are raised ?

IV

Camille was *petite*, with a white skin, and long black hair, and graceful movements. She was swift to understand her mother's wishes, prompt to obey them. So much grace and beauty, joined to so much misfortune, were most disturbing to the Chevalier. He would frequently embrace the girl in an excited manner, exclaiming aloud : “ I am not yet a wicked man ! ”

At the end of the garden there was a wooded walk, to which the Chevalier was in the habit of betaking himself after breakfast. From her chamber window Madame des Arcis often watched him wistfully as he walked to and fro beneath the trees. One morning, with palpitating heart, she ventured to join him. She wished to take Camille to a juvenile ball which was to be held that evening at a neighbouring mansion. She longed to observe the effect which her daughter's beauty would produce upon the outside world and upon her husband. She had passed a sleepless night in devising Camille's toilette, and she cherished the sweetest hopes. “ It must be,” she told herself, “ that he will be proud, and the rest jealous of the poor little one ! She will say nothing, but she will be the most beautiful ! ”

The Chevalier welcomed his wife graciously—quite in the manner of Versailles ! Their conversation commenced with the exchange of a

few insignificant sentences as they walked side by side. Then a silence fell between them, while Madame des Arcis sought fitting words in which to approach her husband on the subject of Camille, and induce him to break his resolution that the child should never see the world. Meanwhile, the Chevalier was also in cogitation. He was the first to speak. He informed his wife that urgent family affairs called him to Holland, and that he ought to start not later than the following morning.

Madame understood his true motive only too easily. The Chevalier was far from contemplating the desertion of his wife, yet felt an irresistible desire, a compelling need of temporary isolation. In almost all true sorrow, man has this craving for solitude—suffering animals have it also.

His wife raised no objection to his project, but fresh grief wrung her heart. Complaining of weariness, she sank upon a seat. There she remained for a long time, lost in sad reverie. She rose at length, put her arm into that of her husband, and they returned together to the house.

The poor lady spent the afternoon quietly and prayerfully in her own room. In the evening, towards eight o'clock, she rang her bell, and ordered the horse to be put into the carriage. At the same time she sent word to the Chevalier that she intended going to the ball, and hoped that he would accompany her.

An embroidered robe of white muslin, small shoes of white satin, a necklace of American beads, a coronet of violets—such was the simple costume of Camille, who, when her mother had dressed her, jumped for joy. As Madame was embracing her child with the words, "You are beautiful! you are beautiful!" the Chevalier joined them. He gave his hand to his wife, and the three went to the ball.

As it was Camille's first appearance in public, she naturally excited a great deal of curiosity. The Chevalier suffered visibly. When his friends praised to him the beauty of his daughter, he felt that they intended to console him, and such consolation was not to his taste. Yet he could not wholly suppress some emotion of pride and joy. His feelings were strangely mixed. After having saluted by gestures almost everybody in the room, Camille was now resting by her mother's side. The general admiration grew more enthusiastic. Nothing, in fact, could have been more lovely than the envelope which held this poor dumb soul. Her figure, her face, her long curling hair, above

all, her eyes of incomparable lustre, surprised every one. Her wistful looks and graceful gestures, too, were so pathetic. People crowded around Madame des Arcis, asking a thousand questions about Camille ; to surprise and a slight coldness succeeded sincere kindness and sympathy. They had never seen such a charming child ; nothing resembled her, for there existed nothing else so charming as she ! Camille was a complete success.

Always outwardly calm, Madame des Arcis tasted to-night the most pure and intense pleasure of her life. A smile that was exchanged between her and her husband was well worth many tears.

Presently, as the Chevalier was still gazing at his daughter, a country-dance began, which Camille watched with an earnest attention that had in it something sad. A boy invited her to join. For answer, she shook her head, causing some of the violets to fall out of her coronet. Her mother picked them up, and soon put to rights the coiffure, which was her own handiwork. Then she looked round for her husband, but he was no longer in the room. She inquired if he had left, and whether he had taken the carriage. She was told that he had gone home on foot.



The Chevalier had resolved to leave home without taking leave of his wife. He shrank from all discussion and explanation, and, as he intended to return in a short time, he believed that he should act more wisely in leaving a letter than by making a verbal farewell. There was *some* truth in his statement of that business affair calling him away, although business was not his first consideration. And now one of his friends had written to hasten his departure. Here was a good excuse. On returning alone to his house (by a much shorter route than that taken by the carriage), he announced his intention to the servants, packed in great haste, sent his light luggage on to the town, mounted his horse, and was gone.

Yet a certain misgiving troubled him, for he knew that his Cécile would be pained by his abrupt departure, although he endeavoured to persuade himself that he did this for her sake no less than for his own. However, he continued on his way.

Meanwhile, Madame des Arcis was returning in the carriage, with her daughter asleep upon her knee. She felt hurt at the Chevalier's rudeness in leaving them to return alone. It seemed such a public

slight upon his wife and child ! Sad forebodings filled the mother's heart as the carriage jolted slowly over the stones of a newly-made road. " God watches over all," she reflected ; " over us as over others. But what shall we do ? What will become of my poor child ? "

At some distance from Chardonneux there was a ford to be crossed. There had been much rain for nearly a month past, causing the river to overflow its banks. The ferryman refused at first to take the carriage into his boat ; he would undertake, he said, to convey the passengers and the horse safely across, but not the vehicle. The lady, anxious to rejoin her husband, would not descend. She ordered the coachman to enter the boat ; it was only a transit of a few minutes, which she had made a hundred times.

In mid-stream the boat was forced by the current from its straight course. The boatman asked the coachman's aid in keeping it away from the weir. For there was not far off a mill with a weir, where the violence of the water had formed a sort of cascade. It was clear that if the boat drifted to this spot there would be a terrible accident.

The coachman descended from his seat, and worked with a will. But he had only a pole to work with, the night was dark, a fine rain blinded the men, and soon the noise of the weir announced the most imminent danger. Madame des Arcis, who had remained in the carriage, opened the window in alarm. " Are we then lost ? " cried she. At that moment the pole broke. The two men fell into the boat exhausted, and with bruised hands.

The ferryman could swim, but not the coachman. There was no time to lose. " Père Georgeot," said Madame to the ferryman, calling him by his name, " can you save my daughter and myself ? "

" Certainly ! " he replied, as if almost insulted by the question.

" What must we do ? " inquired Madame des Arcis.

" Place yourself upon my shoulders," replied the ferryman, " and put your arms about my neck. As for the little one, I will hold her in one hand, and swim with the other, and she shall not get drowned. It is but a short distance from here to the potatoes which grow in yonder field."

" And Jean ? " asked Madame, meaning the coachman.

" Jean will be all right, I hope. If he holds on at the weir, I will return for him."

Père Georgeot struck out with his double burden, but he had overestimated his powers. He was no longer young. The shore was farther off, the current stronger than he had thought. He struggled manfully, but was nearly swept away. Then the trunk of a willow, hidden by the water and the darkness, stopped him suddenly with a violent blow upon the forehead. Blood flowed from the wound and obscured his vision.

"Could you save my child if you had only her to convey?" asked the mother.

"I cannot tell, but I *think* so," said the ferryman.

The mother removed her arms from the man's neck, and let herself slip gently into the water.

When the ferryman had deposited Camille safely on *terra firma*, the coachman, who had been rescued by a peasant, helped him to search for the body of Madame des Arcis. It was found on the following morning, near the bank.

VI

Camille's grief at her mother's loss was terrible to witness. She ran hither and thither, uttering wild, inarticulate cries, tearing her hair, and beating the walls. An unnatural calm succeeded these violent emotions; reason itself seemed well-nigh gone.

It was then that Uncle Giraud came to his niece's rescue. "Poor child!" said he, "she has at present neither father nor mother. With me she has always been a favourite, and I intend now to take charge of her for a time. Change of scene," said Uncle Giraud, "would do her a world of good." With the Chevalier's permission (obtained by letter), he carried off Camille to Paris. The Chevalier returned to Chardonneux, where he lived in deepest retirement, shunning every living being, a prey to grief and keen remorse.

A year passed heavily away. Uncle Giraud had as yet failed utterly to rouse Camille. She steadily refused to be interested in anything. At last, one day he determined to take her, *nolens volens*, to the opera. A new and beautiful dress was purchased for the occasion. When, attired in this, Camille saw herself in the glass, so pleased was she with the pretty picture that, to her good uncle's intense satisfaction, she actually smiled!

VII

Camille soon wearied of the opera. All—actors, musicians, audience—seemed to say to her : “ We speak, and you cannot ; we hear, laugh, sing, rejoice. You rejoice in nothing, hear nothing. You are only a statue, the simulacrum of a being, a mere looker-on at life.”

When, to exclude the mocking spectacle, she closed her eyes, the scenes of her early life rose before the eyes of her mind. She returned in thought to her country home, saw again her mother’s dear face. It was too much ! Uncle Giraud observed, with much concern, tears rolling down her cheeks. When he would have inquired the cause of her grief, she made signs that she wished to leave. She rose, and opened the door of the box.

Just at this moment, something attracted her attention. She caught sight of a good-looking, richly-dressed young man, who was tracing letters and figures with a white pencil upon a small slate. He exhibited this slate now and then to his neighbour, a man older than himself, who evidently understood him at once, and promptly replied in the same manner. At the same time the two exchanged signs.

Camille’s curiosity and interest were deeply stirred. She had already observed that this young man’s lips did not move. She now saw that he spoke a language which was not the language of others, that he had found some means of expressing himself without the aid of speech—that art for her so incomprehensible and impossible. An irresistible longing to see more seized her. She leaned over the edge of the box, and watched the stranger’s movements attentively. When he again wrote something upon his slate, and passed it to his companion, she made an involuntary gesture as if to take it. Whereupon the young man, in his turn, looked at Camille. Their eyes met, and said the same thing, “ We two are in like case ; we are both dumb.”

Uncle Giraud brought his niece’s wrap, but she no longer wished to go. She had reseated herself, and was leaning eagerly forward.

The Abbé de l’Epée was then just becoming known. Touched with pity for the deaf and dumb, this good man had invented a language that he deemed superior to that of Leibnitz. He restored deaf mutes to the ranks of their fellows by teaching them to read and write. Alone and unaided he laboured for his afflicted fellow-creatures, prepared to sacrifice to their welfare his life and fortune.

The young man observed by Camille was one of the Abbé's first pupils. He was the son of the Marquis de Maubray.

VIII

It goes without saying that neither Camille nor her uncle knew anything either of the Abbé de l'Epée or of his new method. Camille's mother would assuredly have discovered it, had she lived long enough. But Chardonneux was far from Paris ; the Chevalier did not take *The Gazette*, nor, if he had taken it, would he have read it. Thus a few leagues of distance, a little indolence, or death, may produce the same result.

Upon Camille's return from the opera, she was possessed with but one idea. She made her uncle understand that she wished for writing materials. Although the good man wanted his supper, he ran to his chamber, and returned with a piece of board and a morsel of chalk, relics of his old love for building and carpentry.

Camille placed the board upon her knee, then made signs to her uncle that he should sit by her and write something upon it. Laying his hand gently upon the girl's breast, he wrote, in large letters, her name, *Camille*, after which, well satisfied with the evening's work, he seated himself at the supper-table.

Camille retired as soon as possible to her own room, clasping her board in her arms. Having laid aside some of her finery, and let down her hair, she began to copy with great pains and care the word which her uncle had written. After writing it many times, she succeeded in forming the letters very fairly. What that word represented to her, who shall say ?

It was a glorious night of July. Camille had opened her window, and from time to time paused in her self-imposed task to gaze out, although the "view" was but a dreary one. The window overlooked a yard in which coaches were kept. Four or five huge carriages stood side by side beneath a shed. Two or three others stood in the centre of the yard, as if awaiting the horses, which could be heard kicking in the stable. The court was shut in by a closed door and high walls.

Suddenly Camille perceived, beneath the shadow of a heavy diligence, a human form pacing to and fro. A feeling of fear seized her. The man was gazing intently at her window. In a few moments

Camille had regained her courage. She took her lamp in her hand, and, leaning from the casement, held it so that its light illumined the court. The Marquis de Maubray (for it was he), perceiving that he was discovered, sank on his knees and clasped his hands, gazing at Camille meanwhile with an expression of respectful admiration. Then he sprang up, and nimbly clambering over two or three intercepting vehicles, was in a few minutes within Camille's room, where his first act was to make her a profound bow. He longed for some means of speaking to her, and, observing upon the table the board bearing the written word *Camille*, he took the piece of chalk, and proceeded to write beside that name his own—*Pierre*.

"Who are you? and what are you doing here?" thundered a wrathful voice. It was that of Uncle Giraud, who at that moment entered the room, and bestowed upon the intruder a torrent of abuse. The Marquis calmly wrote something upon the board, and handed it to Uncle Giraud, who read with amazement the following words: "I love Mademoiselle Camille, and wish to marry her. I am the Marquis de Maubray; will you give her to me?"

The uncle's wrath abated.

"Well!" remarked he to himself, as he recognised the youth he had seen at the opera—"for going straight to the point, and getting through their business quickly, I never saw the like of these dumb folk!"

IX

The course of true love, for once, ran smooth. The Chevalier's consent to this highly desirable match for his daughter was easily obtained. Much more difficult was it to convince him that it was possible to teach deaf mutes to read and write. Seeing, however, is believing. One day, two or three years after the marriage, the Chevalier received a letter from Camille, which began thus: "Oh, father! I can speak, not with my mouth, but with my hand."

She told how she had learned to do this, and to whom she owed her new-born speech—the good Abbé de l'Épée. She described to him the beauty of her baby, and affectionately besought him to pay a visit to his daughter and grandchild.

After receiving this letter, the Chevalier hesitated for a long time.

"Go, by all means," advised Uncle Giraud, when he was consulted. "Do you not reproach yourself continually for having deserted your

wife at the ball ? Will you also forsake your child, who longs to see you ? Let us go together. I consider it most ungrateful of her not to have included me in the invitation."

"He is right," reflected the Chevalier. "I brought cruel and needless suffering upon the best of women. I left her to die a frightful death, when I ought to have been her preserver. If this visit to Camille involves some pain to myself, that is but a merited chastisement. I will taste this bitter pleasure ; I will go and see my child."

x

In the pretty boudoir of a house in the Faubourg St. Germain, Camille's father and uncle found Camille and Pierre. Upon the table lay books and sketches. The husband was reading, the wife embroidering, the child playing on the carpet. At sight of the welcome visitors the Marquis rose, while Camille ran to her father, who, as he embraced her tenderly, could not restrain his tears. Then the Chevalier's earnest look was bent upon the child. In spite of himself, some shadow of the repugnance he had formerly felt for the infirmity of Camille stirred afresh at sight of this small being who had doubtless inherited that infirmity.

"Another mute !," cried he.

Camille raised her son to her arms ; without hearing she had understood. Gently holding out the child towards the Chevalier, she placed her fingers upon the tiny lips, stroking them a little, as if coaxing them to speak. In a few moments he pronounced distinctly the words which his mother had caused him to be taught :

"Good-morning, papa !"

"Now you see clearly," said Uncle Giraud, "that God pardons everything and for ever !"

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER
1811-1872

THE MUMMY'S FOOT

I HAD entered, in an idle mood, the shop of one of those curiosity-vendors, who are called *marchands de bric-à-brac* in that Parisian slang which is so perfectly unintelligible elsewhere in France.

You have doubtless glanced occasionally through the windows of some of these shops, which have become so numerous now that it is fashionable to buy antiquated furniture, and that every petty stock-broker thinks he must have his mediæval room.

There is one thing there which clings alike to the shop of the dealer in old iron, the wareroom of the tapestry-maker, the laboratory of the chemist, and the studio of the painter—in all those gloomy dens where a furtive daylight filters in through the window-shutters the most manifestly ancient thing is dust ;—the cobwebs are more authentic than the guimpe laces ; and the old pear-tree furniture on exhibition is actually younger than the mahogany which arrived but yesterday from America.

The warehouse of my bric-à-brac dealer was a veritable Capharnaum ; all ages and all nations seemed to have made their rendezvous there ; an Etruscan lamp of red clay stood upon a Boule cabinet, with ebony panels, brightly striped by lines of inlaid brass ; a duchess of the court of Louis XV. nonchalantly extended her fawn-like feet under a massive table of the time of Louis XIII., with heavy spiral supports of oak, and carven designs of Chimeras and foliage intermingled.

Upon the denticulated shelves of several sideboards glittered immense Japanese dishes with red and blue designs relieved by gilded hatching ; side by side with enamelled works by Bernard Palissy, representing serpents, frogs, and lizards in relief.

From disembowelled cabinets escaped cascades of silver-lustrous Chinese silks and waves of tinsel, which an oblique sunbeam shot through with luminous beads ; while portraits of every era, in frames more or less tarnished, smiled through their yellow varnish.

The striped breastplate of a damascened suit of Milanese armour

glittered in one corner ; Loves and Nymphs of porcelain ; Chinese grotesques, vases of *céladon* and crackle-ware ; Saxon and old Sèvres cups encumbered the shelves and nooks of the apartment.

The dealer followed me closely through the tortuous way contrived between the piles of furniture ; warding off with his hand the hazardous sweep of my coat-skirts ; watching my elbows with the uneasy attention of an antiquarian and a usurer.

It was a singular face, that of the merchant—an immense skull, polished like a knee, and surrounded by a thin aureole of white hair which brought out the clear salmon tint of his complexion all the more strikingly, lent him a false aspect of patriarchal good nature, counter-acted, however, by the scintillation of two little yellow eyes which trembled in their orbits like two louis-d'or upon quicksilver. The curve of his nose presented an aquiline silhouette, which suggested the Oriental or Jewish type. His hands—thin, slender, full of nerves which projected like strings upon the finger-board of a violin, and armed with claws like those on the terminations of bats' wings—shook with senile trembling ; but those convulsively agitated hands became firmer than steel pincers or lobsters' claws when they lifted any precious article—an onyx cup, a Venetian glass, or a dish of Bohemian crystal. This strange old man had an aspect so thoroughly rabbinical and cabalistic that he would have been burnt on the mere testimony of his face three centuries ago.

"Will you not buy something from me to-day, sir ? Here is a Malay krees with a blade undulating like flame : look at those grooves contrived for the blood to run along, those teeth set backward so as to tear out the entrails in withdrawing the weapon—it is a fine character of ferocious arm, and will look well in your collection : this two-handed sword is very beautiful—it is the work of Josepe de la Hera ; and this *colichemarde*, with its fenestrated guard—what a superb specimen of handicraft ! "

"No ; I have quite enough weapons and instruments of carnage ; I want a small figure, something which will suit me as a paper-weight ; for I cannot endure those trumpery bronzes which the stationers sell, and which may be found on everybody's desk."

The old gnome foraged among his ancient wares, and finally arranged before me some antique bronzes—so-called, at least ; fragments of malachite ; little Hindu or Chinese idols—a kind of poussah-toys in jade-stone, representing the incarnations of Brahma or Vishnu, and

wonderfully appropriate to the very undivine office of holding papers and letters in place.

I was hesitating between a porcelain dragon, all constellated with warts—its mouth formidable with bristling tusks and ranges of teeth—and an abominable little Mexican fetish, representing the god Vitziliputzili *au naturel* ; when I caught sight of a charming foot, which I at first took for a fragment of some antique Venus.

It had those beautiful ruddy and tawny tints that lend to Florentine bronze that warm, living look so much preferable to the grey-green aspect of common bronzes, which might easily be mistaken for statues in a state of putrefaction : satiny gleams played over its rounded forms, doubtless polished by the amorous kisses of twenty centuries ; for it seemed a Corinthian bronze, a work of the best era of art—perhaps moulded by Lysippus himself.

“ That foot will be my choice,” I said to the merchant, who regarded me with an ironical and saturnine air, and held out the object desired that I might examine it more fully.

I was surprised at its lightness ; it was not a foot of metal, but in sooth a foot of flesh—an embalmed foot—a mummy’s foot : on examining it still more closely the very grain of the skin, and the almost imperceptible lines impressed upon it by the texture of the bandages, became perceptible. The toes were slender and delicate, and terminated by perfectly formed nails, pure and transparent as agates ; the great toe, slightly separated from the rest, afforded a happy contrast, in the antique style, to the position of the other toes, and lent it an aerial lightness—the grace of a bird’s foot ;—the sole, scarcely streaked by a few almost imperceptible cross lines, afforded evidence that it had never touched the bare ground, and had only come in contact with the finest matting of Nile rushes, and the softest carpets of panther skin.

“ Ha, ha !—you want the foot of the Princess Hermonthis,” exclaimed the merchant, with a strange giggle, fixing his owlish eyes upon me—“ ha, ha, ha !—for a paper-weight !—an original idea !—artistic idea ! Old Pharaoh would certainly have been surprised had some one told him that the foot of his adored daughter would be used for a paper-weight after he had had a mountain of granite hollowed out as a receptacle for the triple coffin, painted and gilded—covered with hieroglyphics and beautiful paintings of the Judgment of Souls,” continued the queer little merchant, half audibly, as though talking to himself !

"How much will you charge me for this mummy fragment?"

"Ah, the highest price I can get; for it is a superb piece: if I had the match of it you could not have it for less than five hundred francs;—the daughter of a Pharaoh! nothing is more rare."

"Assuredly that is not a common article; but, still, how much do you want? In the first place, let me warn you that all my wealth consists of just five louis: I can buy anything that costs five louis, but nothing dearer;—you might search my vest pockets and most secret drawers without even finding one poor five-franc piece more."

"Five louis for the foot of the Princess Hermonthis! that is very little, very little indeed; 'tis an authentic foot," muttered the merchant, shaking his head, and imparting a peculiar rotary motion to his eyes. "Well, take it, and I will give you the bandages into the bargain," he added, wrapping the foot in an ancient damask rag—"very fine! real damask!—Indian damask which has never been redyed; it is strong, and yet it is soft," he mumbled, stroking the frayed tissue with his fingers, through the trade-acquired habit which moved him to praise even an object of so little value that he himself deemed it only worth the giving away.

He poured the gold coins into a sort of mediæval alms-purse hanging at his belt, repeating:

"The foot of the Princess Hermonthis, to be used for a paper-weight!"

Then turning his phosphorescent eyes upon me, he exclaimed in a voice strident as the crying of a cat which has swallowed a fish-bone:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased: he loved his daughter—the dear man!"

"You speak as if you were a contemporary of his: you are old enough, goodness knows! but you do not date back to the Pyramids of Egypt," I answered laughingly, from the threshold.

I went home, delighted with my acquisition.

With the idea of putting it to a profitable use as soon as possible, I placed the foot of the divine Princess Hermonthis upon a heap of papers scribbled over with verses, in themselves an undecipherable mosaic work of erasures; articles freshly begun; letters forgotten, and posted in the table drawer instead of the letter-box—an error to which absent-minded people are peculiarly liable. The effect was charming, bizarre and romantic.

Well satisfied with this embellishment, I went out with the gravity

and pride becoming one who feels that he has the ineffable advantage over all passers-by whom he elbows, of possessing a piece of the Princess Hermonthis, daughter of Pharaoh.

I looked upon all who did not possess, like myself, a paper-weight so authentically Egyptian as very ridiculous people ; and it seemed to me that the proper occupation of every sensible man should consist in the mere fact of having a mummy's foot upon his desk.

Happily I met some friends, whose presence distracted me in my infatuation with this new acquisition : I went to dinner with them ; for I could not very well have dined with myself.

When I came back that evening, with my brain slightly confused by a few glasses of wine, a vague whiff of Oriental perfume delicately titillated my olfactory nerves : the heat of the room had warmed the natron, bitumen and myrrh in which the *paraschistes*, who cut open the bodies of the dead, had bathed the corpse of the princess ;—it was a perfume at once sweet and penetrating—a perfume that four thousand years had not been able to dissipate.

The Dream of Egypt was Eternity ; her odours have the solidity of granite, and endure as long.

I soon drank deeply from the black cup of sleep : for a few hours all remained opaque to me ; Oblivion and Nothingness inundated me with their sombre waves.

Yet light gradually dawned upon the darkness of my mind : dreams commenced to touch me softly in their silent flight.

The eyes of my soul were opened ; and I beheld my chamber as it actually was : I might have believed myself awake, but for a vague consciousness which assured me that I slept, and that something fantastic was about to take place.

The odour of myrrh had augmented in intensity : and I felt a slight headache, which I very naturally attributed to several glasses of champagne that we had drunk to the unknown gods and our future fortunes.

I peered through my room with a feeling of expectation which I saw nothing to justify : every article of furniture was in its proper place ; the lamp, softly shaded by its globe of ground crystal, burned upon its bracket ; the water-colour sketches shone under their Bohemian glass ; the curtains hung down languidly ; everything wore the aspect of tranquil slumber.

After a few moments, however, all this calm interior appeared

to become disturbed ; the woodwork cracked stealthily ; the ash-covered log suddenly emitted a jet of blue flame ; and the disks of the pateras seemed like great metallic eyes, watching, like myself, for the things which were about to happen.

My eyes accidentally fell upon the desk where I had placed the foot of the Princess Hermonthis.

Instead of remaining quiet—as behoved a foot which had been embalmed for four thousand years—it commenced to act in a nervous manner ; contracted itself, and leaped over the papers like a startled frog ;—one would have imagined that it had suddenly been brought into contact with a galvanic battery : I could distinctly hear the dry sound made by its little heel, hard as the hoof of a gazelle.

I became rather discontented with my acquisition, inasmuch as I wished my paper-weights to be of a sedentary disposition, and thought it very unnatural that feet should walk about without legs ; and I commenced to experience a feeling closely akin to fear.

Suddenly I saw the folds of my bed-curtain stir ; and heard a bumping sound, like that caused by some person hopping on one foot across the floor. I must confess I became alternately hot and cold ; that I felt a strange wind chill my back ; and that my suddenly-rising hair caused my nightcap to execute a leap of several yards.

The bed-curtains opened, and I beheld the strangest figure imaginable before me.

It was a young girl of a very deep coffee-brown complexion, like the bayadere Amani, and possessing the purest Egyptian type of perfect beauty ; her eyes were almond-shaped and oblique, with eyebrows so black that they seemed blue ; her nose was exquisitely chiselled, almost Greek in its delicacy of outline ; and she might indeed have been taken for a Corinthian statue of bronze, but for the prominence of her cheek-bones and the slightly African fulness of her lips, which compelled one to recognise her as belonging, beyond all doubt, to the hieroglyphic race which dwelt upon the banks of the Nile.

Her arms, slender and spindle-shaped, like those of very young girls, were encircled by a peculiar kind of metal bands, and bracelets of glass beads ; her hair was all twisted into little cords ; and she wore upon her bosom a little idol figure of green paste, bearing a whip with seven lashes, which proved it to be an image of Isis : her brow was adorned with a shining plate of gold ; and a few traces of paint relieved the coppery tint of her cheeks.

As for her costume, it was very odd indeed.

Fancy a *pagne* or skirt all formed of little strips of material bedizened with red and black hieroglyphics, stiffened with bitumen, and apparently belonging to a freshly unbandaged mummy.

In one of those sudden flights of thought so common in dreams I heard the hoarse falsetto of the bric-à-brac dealer, repeating like a monotonous refrain the phrase he had uttered in his shop with so enigmatical an intonation :

“ Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased : he loved his daughter, the dear man ! ”

One strange circumstance, which was not at all calculated to restore my equanimity, was that the apparition had but one foot ; the other was broken off at the ankle !

She approached the table where the foot was starting and fidgeting about more than ever ; and there supported herself upon the edge of the desk. I saw her eyes fill with pearly-gleaming tears.

Although she had not as yet spoken, I fully comprehended the thoughts which agitated her : she looked at her foot—for it was indeed her own—with an exquisitely graceful expression of coquettish sadness ; but the foot leaped and ran hither and thither, as though impelled on steel springs.

Twice or thrice she extended her hand to seize it, but could not succeed.

Then commenced between the Princess Hermonthis and her foot—which appeared to be endowed with a special life of its own—a very fantastic dialogue in a most ancient Coptic tongue, such as might have been spoken thirty centuries ago in the syrnexes of the land of Ser : luckily I understood Coptic perfectly well that night.

The Princess Hermonthis cried, in a voice sweet and vibrant as the tones of a crystal bell :

“ Well, my dear little foot, you always flee from me ; yet I always took good care of you. I bathed you with perfumed water in a bowl of alabaster ; I smoothed your heel with pumice-stone mixed with palm oil ; your nails were cut with golden scissors and polished with a hippopotamus tooth ; I was careful to select *tatbebs* for you, painted and embroidered and turned up at the toes, which were the envy of all the young girls in Egypt : you wore on your great toe rings bearing the device of the sacred Scarabæus ; and you supported one of the lightest bodies that a lazy foot could sustain.

The foot replied in a pouting and chagrined tone :

" You know well that I do not belong to myself any longer. I have been bought and paid for : the old merchant knew what he was about : he bore you a grudge for having refused to espouse him. This is an ill turn which he has done you. The Arab who violated your royal coffin in the subterranean pits of the necropolis of Thebes was sent thither by him : he desired to prevent you from being present at the reunion of the shadowy nations in the cities below. Have you five pieces of gold for my ransom ? "

" Alas, no !—my jewels, my rings, my purses of gold and silver, were all stolen from me," answered the Princess Hermonthis, with a sob.

" Princess," I then exclaimed, " I never retained anybody's foot unjustly ;—even though you have not got the five louis which it cost me, I present it to you gladly : I should feel unutterably wretched to think that I were the cause of so amiable a person as the Princess Hermonthis being lame."

I delivered this discourse in a royally gallant, troubadour tone which must have astonished the beautiful Egyptian girl.

She turned a look of deepest gratitude upon me ; and her eyes shone with bluish gleams of light.

She took her foot—which surrendered itself willingly this time—like a woman about to put on her little shoe ; and adjusted it to her leg with much skill.

This operation over, she took a few steps about the room, as though to assure herself that she was really no longer lame.

" Ah, how pleased my father will be !—he who was so unhappy because of my mutilation ; and who from the moment of my birth set a whole nation at work to hollow me out a tomb so deep that he might preserve me intact until that last day, when souls must be weighed in the balance of Amenthi ! Come with me to my father ;—he will receive you kindly ; for you have given me back my foot."

I thought this proposition natural enough. I arrayed myself in a dressing-gown of large-flowered pattern, which lent me a very Pharaonic aspect ; hurriedly put on a pair of Turkish slippers ; and informed the Princess Hermonthis that I was ready to follow her.

Before starting, Hermonthis took from her neck the little idol of green paste, and laid it on the scattered sheets of paper which covered the table.

"It is only fair," she observed, smilingly, "that I should replace your paper-weight."

She gave me her hand, which felt soft and cold, like the skin of a serpent; and we departed.

We passed for some time with the velocity of an arrow through a fluid and greyish expanse, in which half-formed silhouettes flitted swiftly by us, to right and left.

For an instant we saw only sky and sea.

A few moments later obelisks commenced to tower in the distance: pylons and vast flights of steps guarded by sphinxes became clearly outlined against the horizon.

We had reached our destination.

The princess conducted me to a mountain of rose-coloured granite, in the face of which appeared an opening so narrow and low that it would have been difficult to distinguish it from the fissures in the rock, had not its location been marked by two stelæ wrought with sculptures.

Hermonthis kindled a torch, and led the way before me.

We traversed corridors hewn through the living rock: their walls, covered with hieroglyphics and paintings of allegorical processions, might well have occupied thousands of arms for thousands of years in their formation;—these corridors, of interminable length, opened into square chambers, in the midst of which pits had been contrived, through which we descended by cramp-irons or spiral stairways;—these pits again conducted us into other chambers, opening into other corridors, likewise decorated with painted sparrow-hawks, serpents coiled in circles, the symbols of the *tau* and *pedum*—prodigious works of art which no living eye can ever examine—interminable legends of granite which only the dead have time to read through all eternity.

At last we found ourselves in a hall so vast, so enormous, so immeasurable, that the eye could not reach its limits; files of monstrous columns stretched far out of sight on every side, between which twinkled livid stars of yellowish flame;—points of light which revealed farther depths incalculable in the darkness beyond.

The Princess Hermonthis still held my hand, and graciously saluted the mummies of her acquaintance.

My eyes became accustomed to the dim twilight; and objects became discernible.

I beheld the kings of the subterranean races seated upon thrones—

grand old men, though dry, withered, wrinkled like parchment, and blackened with naphtha and bitumen—all wearing *pshefts* of gold, and breast-plates and gorgets glittering with precious stones; their eyes immovably fixed like the eyes of sphinxes, and their long beards whitened by the snow of centuries. Behind them stood their peoples, in the stiff and constrained posture enjoined by Egyptian art, all eternally preserving the attitude prescribed by the hieratic code. Behind these nations, the cats, ibixes and crocodiles contemporary with them—rendered monstrous of aspect by their swathing bands—mewed, flapped their wings, or extended their jaws in a saurian giggle.

All the Pharaohs were there—Cheops, Chephrenes, Psammetichus, Sesostri, Amenotaph—all the dark rulers of the pyramids and syringes:—on yet higher thrones sat Chronos and Xixouthros—who was contemporary with the deluge; and Tubal Cain, who reigned before it.

The beard of King Xixouthros had grown seven times around the granite table, upon which he leaned, lost in deep reverie—and buried in dreams.

Farther back, through a dusty cloud, I beheld dimly the seventy-two Pre-adamite Kings, with their seventy-two peoples—for ever passed away.

After permitting me to gaze upon this bewildering spectacle a few moments, the Princess Hermonthis presented me to her father Pharaoh, who favoured me with a most gracious nod.

“I have found my foot again!—I have found my foot!” cried the princess, clapping her little hands together with every sign of frantic joy: “it was this gentleman who restored it to me.”

The races of Kemi, the races of Nahasi—all the black, bronzed, and copper-coloured nations repeated in chorus:

“The Princess Hermonthis has found her foot again!”

Even Xixouthros himself was visibly affected.

He raised his heavy eyelids, stroked his moustache with his fingers, and turned upon me a glance weighty with centuries.

“By Oms, the dog of Hell, and Tmei, daughter of the Sun and of Truth! this is a brave and worthy lad!” exclaimed Pharaoh, pointing to me with his sceptre which was terminated with a lotus-flower.

“What recompense do you desire?”

Filled with that daring inspired by dreams in which nothing seems impossible, I asked him for the hand of the Princess Hermonthis;—the hand seemed to me a very proper antithetic recompense for the foot.

Pharaoh opened wide his great eyes of glass in astonishment at my witty request.

"What country do you come from? and what is your age?"

"I am a Frenchman; and I am twenty-seven years old, venerable Pharaoh."

"Twenty-seven years old! and he wishes to espouse the Princess Hermonthis, who is thirty centuries old!" cried out at once all the Thrones and all the Circles of Nations.

Only Hermonthis herself did not seem to think my request unreasonable.

"If you were even only two thousand years old," replied the ancient King, "I would willingly give you the Princess; but the disproportion is too great; and, besides, we must give our daughters husbands who will last well: you do not know how to preserve yourselves any longer; even those who died only fifteen centuries ago are already no more than a handful of dust;—behold! my flesh is solid as basalt; my bones are bars of steel!

"I will be present on the last day of the world, with the same body and the same features which I had during my lifetime: my daughter Hermonthis will last longer than a statue of bronze.

"Then the last particles of your dust will have been scattered abroad by the winds; and even Isis herself, who was able to find the atoms of Osiris, would scarce be able to recompose your being.

"See how vigorous I yet remain, and how mighty is my grasp," he added, shaking my hand in the English fashion with a strength that buried my rings in the flesh of my fingers.

He squeezed me so hard that I awoke, and found my friend Alfred shaking me by the arm to make me get up.

"O you everlasting sleeper!—must I have you carried out into the middle of the street, and fireworks exploded in your ears? It is after noon; don't you recollect your promise to take me with you to see M. Aguado's Spanish pictures?"

"God! I forgot all, all about it," I answered, dressing myself hurriedly; "we will go there at once; I have the permit lying there on my desk."

I started to find it;—but fancy my astonishment when I beheld, instead of the mummy's foot I had purchased the evening before, the little green paste idol left in its place by the Princess Hermonthis!

THE PAVILION ON THE LAKE

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

IN the province of Canton, some leagues from the town, there lived side by side two rich Chinamen who had retired from affairs. One was called Tou, and the other Kouan. Tou had occupied a high scientific position. He was a member of the Jasper Chamber. Kouan, in a lower walk of life, had amassed a fortune and won much consideration.

The two Chinamen were distantly related, and had been loving friends. In their younger days they delighted to forgather with some of their old school-fellows ; in the autumn evenings they would let their brushes, charged with black ink, fly over the canvas of flowered paper, and celebrate in verse the beauty of the aster flower, while drinking little cups of wine. But their two characters, that first showed scarcely any differences, became, with age, quite opposed to each other. So an almond branch will divide into two stems which, connecting at the bottom, will completely separate at the top, in such a way that, while one sheds its bitter fragrance over the garden, the other will loosen its snow of flowers outside the wall.

From year to year Tou took on seriousness ; his stomach swelled out majestically ; his chin, with its three folds, shelved out with a solemn air. He wrote nothing except moral couplets suitable for hanging on the posts of pagodas. Kouan, on the contrary, seemed to grow jollier with age. More joyfully than ever, he sang of wine and flowers and swallows. His mind, free from vulgar cares, was keen and alert, like that of a young man ; and when the word that he had to enshrine in a verse was given, his hand did not hesitate a single moment.

Little by little the two friends had acquired an animosity against each other. They could no longer speak without scratching each other with sharp words ; they were like two hedges of brambles, bristling with thorns. Things came to such a point that they broke off all communication, and each hung on the front of his house a tablet formally forbidding any person of the neighbouring dwelling-place to cross the threshold under any pretext whatever. They would have

much liked to be able to take their houses away, and fix them somewhere else. Unhappily, that was not possible. Tou even tried to sell his property, but he could not get a reasonable offer. And besides it would have hurt him to leave the carven wainscoting, the polished tables, the transparent windows, the gilded trellis work, the bamboo seats, the porcelain vases, the cabinets of red and black lacquer, the scrolls of ancient poems, which he had taken so much trouble in arranging. It is always hard to yield to strangers the garden you have planted yourself with willows, peach trees, and plum trees; where you have seen, every springtime, the lovely cherry-blossom open. Each of these objects attaches itself to the heart of a man with a thread finer than silk, but as difficult to break as an iron chain.

At the time when Tou and Kouan were friends, they had each built in their garden a pavilion on the edge of a little lake, common to both estates. It was a pleasure for them to send familiar greetings from the height of the balcony, and to smoke the drop of flaming opium on the mushroom-shaped pipe of porcelain, while exchanging benevolent whiffs. But since their dissensions they had had a wall built that separated the lake into two equal parts. But as the lake was very deep, the wall was supported on piles, forming a kind of low arcade, with arches through which passed a water with long trembling reflections of the opposite pavilion.

These pavilions were in three storeys, with the terraces set back. The roofs, turned up and curved in angles like the toe of a wooden shoe, were covered with round, brilliant tiles, like the scales that cover the stomach of a carp. On each ridge were outlined denticulations in the form of dragons and foliage. Pillars of red varnish, connected by an open-work frieze, like the ivory leaf of a fan, upheld this graceful roofing. Their shafts rested on a little low wall covered with squares of porcelain arranged with delightful symmetry, and edged with a hand-rail of an odd design in such a way as to form an open gallery in front of the body of the building.

This arrangement was repeated on each floor, not without some variations. Here the squares of porcelain were replaced by low reliefs representing scenes of country life; the network of branches, curiously deformed and making unexpected angles, was used for the balcony; posts in bright colours served as pedestals for mystical monsters covered with warts and fantastic creatures produced by uniting together every impossibility. The edifice ended in a hollowed-out, gilded

cornice, furnished with a balustrade of bamboos with equal knots, adorned at each compartment with a metal bowl. The interior was not less splendid. On the walls the poems of Tou'chi and of Li'tai'pe were written by an agile hand in perpendicular lines of golden characters on a background of lacquer. Sheets of talc let a milky and opalescent light filter through the windows ; and on their ledges, pots of peonies, of orchids, of Chinese cowslips, of erythrina with flowering branches, placed with art, delighted the eyes with their delicate gradations of colour. Squares of silk, magnificently embroidered with foliage, were laid in the corners of each room ; and on the tables, that reflected like looking-glasses, there were always tooth-picks, fans, ebony pipes, porphyry stones, brushes, and all that was needed to write. Artificial rocks, in the chinks of which willows and walnuts plunged their roots, served on the land side as a base for these picturesque constructions ; on the water side, they were carried on posts of indestructible wood.

It was really a charming sight to see the willow fling her filaments of gold and her tassels of silk from the height of these rocks down to the surface of the water, while the brilliant colours of the pavilion glistened in a frame of variegated foliage.

Under the clear water, blue fishes with golden scales gambolled in bands ; flocks of pretty ducks with emerald necks played about in all directions ; and the large leaves of the great water-lily languidly spread out under the diamond-like transparency of this little lake, fed by an underground spring. Except towards the middle, where the bottom was formed of a silver sand of extraordinary fineness, and where the ebullitions of a rising spring prevented any aquatic vegetation from taking root, all the rest of the lake was carpeted with the loveliest green velvet you can imagine, by sheets of perennial cress.

Without the ugly wall raised by the reciprocal inimity of the two neighbours, there would not surely have been in the whole extent of the Celestial Empire, that occupies as you know more than three parts of the world, a more picturesque and more delightful garden.

Each owner would have enlarged his property by the vista of his neighbour's ground, for man here below can only take objects according to their appearance. Such as it was, however, a wise man would not have wished, when ending his life in the contemplation of nature and the amusements of poetry, a more propitious and charming retreat.

Tou and Kouan had by their quarrel obtained only a wall as a perspective, and had deprived each other of the view of the pleasant

pavilions, but they consoled themselves with the idea of having injured each other.

This state of things had already obtained for several years. Nettles and weeds invaded the paths that led from one house to the other. Branches of thorny shrubs were interlaced, as though they wished to intercept all communication. It looked as though the plants understood the dissensions that divided the two old friends, and took part in the quarrel, and tried to separate them still more.

During this time the wives of Tou and Kouan had each given birth to a child. Madame Tou was the mother of a charming girl, and Madame Kouan of the prettiest boy in the world. This happy event, which had brought joy to both houses, was ignored by one and the other. For though their estates touched, the two Chinamen lived as remote from each other as though they had been separated by the Yellow River or the Great Wall. Common acquaintances avoided all allusion to the neighbouring house, and the servants, if they chanced to meet, had orders not to speak, under pain of whipping and torture.

The boy was called Tchín-Sing, and the girl, Ju-Kiouan, that is to say, "Pearl" and "Jasper"; and their perfect beauty justified the choice of these names. As soon as they were able to toddle, the wall that cut the lake in two and unpleasantly stopped the view attracted their attention. They asked their parents what there was behind this barrier so strangely placed in the middle of a sheet of water, and to whom belonged the tall tree whose tops could just be seen. They were told it was the dwelling-place of some odd, crotchety, peevish folk who were very unsociable, and that the barrier had been made as a protection against such wicked neighbours.

This explanation was sufficient for the children. They became accustomed to the wall and took no more interest in it. Ju-Kiouan grew in graces and in perfections. She was distinguished in all the works of her sex, and handled the needle with an incomparable skill. The butterflies she embroidered on satin seemed to live and beat their wings. You could have sworn you heard the song of the birds that she fixed on the canvas; more than one mistaken nose was stuck against her tapestries to smell the fragrance of the flowers she had sewn there. This was not the limit of the talents of Ju-Kiouan. She knew by heart the Book of Odes and the five rules of conduct; never a lighter hand threw on silk paper clearer and bolder characters. Dragons were not so rapid in their flight as her wrist, when it poured

down the black rain of the writing-brush. She knew all the styles of poetry, and composed pieces full of merit on subjects that would naturally strike a young girl—on the return of the swallows, the willows in spring, the asters, and similar subjects. Many a lettered man who thinks himself worthy of bestriding the golden horse could not improvise with so much facility.

Tchin-Sing had profited no less by his studies. His name was found first on the list of examinations. Although he was very young, he was able to put on the black cap ; and already every mother thought that a lad so advanced in the sciences would make an excellent son-in-law, and soon arrive at the highest literary dignities. But Tchin-Sing replied with a merry air to the marriage-brokers that it was too soon, and that he desired to enjoy still longer his liberty. He refused in succession Hon-Giu, Lo-Men-Gli, Oma, Po-Fo, and other young ladies of great distinction. Never, without excepting the handsome Fan-Gan, whose carriage the ladies filled with sweets and oranges when he returned from archery—never was a young man so feasted, watched over, and sollicitated ; but his heart seemed insensible to love ; yet not through coldness, for it could be divined by a thousand details that Tchin-Sing had a tender heart, but it seemed as though he remembered some beloved image known in a former life, and that he hoped to find it again in his present existence. It was in vain they boasted to him of eyebrows of willow leaf, of imperceptible feet, of dragon-fly waists belonging to the beauties offered to him in marriage. He listened with a distracted air, as if thinking of something else.

For her part, Ju-Kiouan did not show herself less difficult ; she dismissed all pretenders to her hand. This one saluted without grace, that one was not careful about his clothes ; one had a heavy and commonplace way of writing ; the other did not know the book of verses, or had made a mistake about a rhyme ; in short, they all had some defect. Ju-Kiouan sketched such comical portraits of them that her parents ended by laughing themselves, and, with all politeness, showed to the door the poor aspirant who thought he had already set his foot on the threshold of the eastern pavilion.

In the end, the parents of both children were alarmed at their persistence in rejecting every offer of marriage. Madame Tou and Madame Kouan, occupied no doubt with ideas of marriage, continued in their dreams by night their thoughts of a daytime. One of the dreams which they had impressed them very deeply. Madame

Kouan dreamt that she saw on the breast of her son a jasper stone so marvellously polished that it sparkled like a carbuncle. Madame Tou dreamt that her daughter wore on her neck the finest orient pearl, of an inestimable value. What was the meaning of these two dreams? Did that of Madame Kouan foreshow that Tchin-Sing would win the honours of the Imperial Academy? Did that of Madame Tou signify that Ju-Kiouan would find some treasure buried in the garden or under a brick of the fireplace? Such explanations were not unreasonable; most persons would have been content with them. But these good ladies only saw in their dreams allusions to extremely fine marriages that their children would soon make. Unhappily, Tchin-Sing and Ju-Kiouan persisted more than ever in their resolution, and belied the prophecies.

Although Kouan and Tou had had no dreams, they were astonished at such stubbornness. Marriage was usually a ceremony for which young people did not show so sustained an aversion. They fancied that the resistance was perhaps due to a preconceived inclination; but Tchin-Sing had not courted any maiden, and no young man walked up and down the trellis work outside Ju-Kiouan's room. Some days of observation sufficed to convince the two families of this. Madame Tou and Madame Kouan believed more than ever in the great destinies foretold in their dreams.

The two women went separately to consult the bonze of the temple of Fo—a fine edifice with carven roofs, round windows, gleaming with gold and varnish, plastered with votive tablets, adorned with masts, from which hung banners of silk embroidered with dragons and monsters, and shadowed by aged trees of enormous thickness. After having burnt gilded papers and perfumes before the idol, the bonze told Madame Tou that the jasper must be joined to the pearl, and informed Madame Kouan that the pearl must be united to the jasper, and that only by this union would all the difficulties be ended. Little satisfied by this ambiguous answer, the two women went home by different paths, without having seen each other in the temple. Their perplexity was much greater than before.

Now it happened that one day Ju-Kiouan was leaning on the balustrade of the pavilion at precisely the hour when Tchin-Sing was doing the same thing behind the wall. The weather was fine—no cloud veiled the sky, there was not enough wind to shake an aspen leaf, and the surface of the pond was more level than a looking-glass. If, in its

play, a carp made a leap and traced a circle on the water it soon vanished. The trees by the shore were reflected so exactly that one hesitated between the image and the reality. It looked like a forest planted upside down, and connecting its roots with the roots of a similar mass of trees—a wood that had drowned itself out of unhappy love. The fish seemed to be swimming in the leaves, and the birds to be flying in the water. Ju-Kiouan was amusing herself by studying this marvellous transparency, when, casting her eyes over the part of the lake by the wall, she saw the reflection of the opposite pavilion, which stretched to there, by sliding underneath the arch.

She had never paid attention to this singular play of reflections, and it surprised and interested her. She distinguished the red pillars, the carven frieze, the pots of asters, the gilded vanes, and if the refraction had not reversed them she would have read the sentences written on the tablets. But what astonished her to the highest degree was to see, leaning from the balcony, in a position like her own, a figure that so resembled her own that if it had not come from the other side of the lake she would have taken it for herself. It was the shadow of Tchín-Sing, and if you find it strange that a lad can be taken for a maid, I must explain that Tchín-Sing had taken off his hat, by reason of the heat, and he was extremely young and beardless. His delicate features, his fine colour, and his brilliant eyes easily led to the illusion which, for the rest, did not last long.

Ju-Kiouan, from the movements of her heart, quickly recognised it was not a girl whose image was repeated in the water. Until then she had thought that the earth did not contain a being created for her, and very often she had wished she had at her order one of the horses of Fargana, that cover a thousand leagues a day, to search for a husband in imaginary space. She fancied she was unparalleled in this world, and that she would never know the sweetness of the union of marriage. "Never," she used to say to herself, "shall I consecrate the duck-weed and alasma on the ancestral altar, and I shall enter alone among the mulberry trees and the elms !"

On seeing the reflection in the water, she understood that her loveliness had a sister, or rather a brother. Far from being angry, she was quite happy. The pride of thinking herself unique quickly gave way to love ; for at this moment the heart of Ju-Kiouan was bound for ever. A single glance, not directly, but at a mere reflection, was sufficient for that. And do not accuse her, on this account, of frivolity.

It may seem a madness to fall in love with a young man on seeing his reflection, but except in a long intercourse permitting the study of character, what more do we see in men? A purely exterior aspect, like that given by a mirror! And isn't it proper for young girls to discern the soul of the future husband by the enamel of his teeth, or the way he cuts his finger-nails?

Tchin-Sing had also perceived this marvellous beauty. "Do I dream wide awake?" he cried. "This charming figure that sparkles under the crystal water must have been formed by the silver rays of the moon, on a night in spring, and the most subtle fragrance of flowers. Though I have never seen her, I recognise her: it is she whose image is graven in my heart, the unknown shape of beauty to whom I address my couplets and quatrains."

Tchin-Sing was still holding forth in a monologue when he heard his father calling him.

"My son," he said, "it is a very rich and very suitable lady who is offered to thee by the intervention of my friend, Wing. It is a girl with imperial blood in her veins, whose beauty is celebrated, and who possesses all the qualities proper to make a husband happy."

Tchin-Sing, all preoccupied by the adventure of the pavilion, and burning with love for the image glimpsed in the water, abruptly refused. His father, wild with anger, threatened most violently.

"Wretched boy!" cried the old man, "if thou persistest in thy stubbornness, I shall beg the mandarin to have thee sent to that fortress occupied by the barbarians of Europe, from which a man can see only mountains capped with clouds, and black water furrowed by those monstrous inventions of evil spirits that vomit a smoke and move with wheels. There wilt thou have time to reflect and amend!"

These menaces did not greatly frighten Tchin-Sing. He replied that he would accept the first spouse presented to him, providing she were not that one.

The next day at the same hour he went to the pavilion, and, as on the evening before, leant from the balcony. At the end of some minutes he saw, lengthening out over the water, the reflection of Ju-Kiouan, like a nosegay of submerged flowers. The young man put his hand on his heart, and sent kisses from his finger-tips to the reflection, with a gesture of grace and passion.

A joyful smile opened like a pomegranate bud in the transparence of the lake, and proved to Tchin-Sing that he was not unagreeable to

the unknown beauty. But as a man cannot hold long conversations with a reflection whose body is unseen, he made a sign that he was going to write, and withdrew to the interior of the pavilion. After a little time he came out, holding a square of silvery-tinted paper, on which he had improvised a declaration of love in verses of seven syllables. Rolling up his piece of poetry, he enclosed it in the chalice of a flower, and enveloping it in the large leaf of a water-lily, he placed it all delicately on the waters.

A light breeze, that came very conveniently, pushed his declaration towards one of the arches of the wall, so that Ju-Kiouan had only to stoop in order to gather it. For fear of being surprised, she retired into the innermost chamber, and read with infinite pleasure the expressions of love and the metaphors that Tchín-Sing had used. Besides the joy of knowing she was loved, she experienced the satisfaction of being wooed by a man of merit ; for the beauty of the writing, the choice of words, the exactitude of the rhymes, the brilliance of the images, showed his excellent education. What struck her above all was the name of Tchín-Sing. She had heard her mother speak too often of the dream of the pearl not to be taken with the coincidence. So she did not doubt an instant that Tchín-Sing was the spouse that heaven had destined for her.

The following day, as the wind had changed, Ju-Kiouan sent by the same means, towards the opposite pavilion, an answer in verse, in which, despite the modesty natural to a young girl, it was easy to see that she returned the love of Tchín-Sing. In reading the signature of the letter, the young man could not help an exclamation of surprise : " The Jasper ! Was not this the precious stone that my mother saw in a dream shining on my bosom ? Decidedly, I must present myself at this house, for it is there that the spouse lives, presaged by the nocturnal spirits ! "

As he was about to go out, he remembered the quarrels that divided the two houses, and the prohibitions written on the tablets. Not knowing what to do, he told all the story to Madame Kouan. Ju-Kiouan, for her part, had related everything to Madame Tou. The names of Pearl and Jasper seemed decisive to the two matrons, who returned to the temple to consult the bonze. The priest said that such in effect was the meaning of the dreams, and that the anger of heaven would fall on those who did not conform with it. Touched by the entreaties of the two mothers, and also by the small gifts they made to him, the bonze

undertook to deal with Tou and Kouan, and so well did he entangle them that they could not retract when he revealed the true origin of the bride and bridegroom. Meeting again after so long a time, the two old friends could not understand how they had been able to separate on such trivial grounds, and felt how much they lost in being deprived of each other's company. The wedding took place ; and the Pearl and the Jasper could at last talk to one another otherwise than by means of a reflection. Did it make them happier ? That we dare not affirm ; for happiness is only but a shadow in the water.

THE NEST OF NIGHTINGALES

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

ROUND the castle there was a beautiful park. In the park were all kinds of birds : nightingales, thrushes, linnets. All the birds of the earth made a meeting-place of the park.

In spring-time you could not hear yourselves speak for the warbling and chirping ; every leaf hid a nest, every tree was an orchestra. The little feathered musicians vied with each other in eager rivalry. Some chirped, others cooed ; some trilled and executed brilliant shakes, others introduced flourishes, or embellished their songs with rests. Human musicians could not have done as well.

But in the castle were two beautiful cousins who sang better than all the birds in the park. One was named Fleurette, the other Isabeau. Both were beautiful and charming, and on Sundays, dressed in their pretty gowns, had not their white shoulders proved them to be mortals, you would have taken them for angels : only the wings were wanting. When they sang, their uncle, old Sir Maulevrier, often held their hands for fear they should take it into their heads to fly away.

I leave to your imagination the number of lances broken at the tilts and tournaments in Fleurette's and Isabeau's honour. Their reputation for beauty and talent spread over the whole of Europe, and yet they did not become vain. They lived in retirement, seeing no one except the page Valentine, a pretty fair-haired child, and Sir Maulevrier, a white-haired old man, worn and weather-beaten from his sixty years' service in the wars.

They spent their time in feeding the little birds, in saying their prayers, and chiefly in studying the works of the great composers and in practising together some motet, madrigal, villanelle, or other music. There were also the flowers which they watered and tended themselves. Thus they spent their days in sweet and poetical occupations perfectly suited to young girls. They kept themselves retired, and far from the gaze of the world, and yet the world did not let them alone. Neither a nightingale nor a rose can be hidden ; they

must always be betrayed by their song and their odour. Our two cousins were at once two nightingales and two roses.

Dukes and princes asked them in marriage ; the Emperor of Trebizond and the Sultan of Egypt sent ambassadors to Sir Maulevrier with proposals for an alliance. But the two cousins were not weary of a single life, and refused to listen to a word about marriage. Perhaps some secret instinct told them that it was their mission in this world to remain unmarried, and to sing, and that in acting differently they would fail to accomplish it.

They had come to the castle when quite little. The window of their room looked on to the park, and they had been rocked to the tune of the birds' songs. They were scarcely able to stand when their uncle's minstrel, old Blondiau, placed their little hands on the ivory keys of the virginal ; that was their baby's rattle. They could sing before they could speak ; they sang as others breathed—by nature.

Such an education influenced their characters in a singular fashion. Their melodious childhood differed from the ordinarily turbulent and noisy period of infancy. They had never uttered a shrill cry or a discordant lament : they wept in time, and sobbed in harmony. The musical sense, developed in them at the expense of the others, made them well-nigh insensible to all that was not music. They floated on a sea of melody, and scarcely perceived the actual world except by sounds. They perfectly understood the rustling of the leaves, the murmur of the waters, the striking of the clock, the sighing of the wind in the chimney, the hum of the spinning-wheel, the falling of the rain-drop on the vibrating window-pane, all exterior and interior harmonies. But I must confess a sunset roused no great enthusiasm in them, and they were as little able to appreciate a painting as if their beautiful blue and black eyes had been covered with a thick film. They had the malady of music ; they dreamed of it, and could neither eat nor drink : they cared for nothing else in the world. Yes, they cared for two things besides—Valentine and their flowers : Valentine because he resembled the roses, and the roses because they resembled Valentine. But that love was entirely relegated to the second place. It is true Valentine was only thirteen years old. Their greatest delight was to sit at the window of an evening, and sing the music they had composed during the day.

The most celebrated musicians came from far to hear them, and to compete with them. Scarcely had they listened to a few bars than

they broke their instruments and tore up their scores, declaring themselves vanquished. It was in fact such wondrous and melodious music that the heavenly angels came to the casement with the other musicians, and learned it by heart to sing to the good God.

One May evening the cousins were singing a motet for two voices ; never had so beautiful an air been so splendidly worked out and rendered. A nightingale from the park, snugly perched on a rose-tree, listened to them attentively. When they had finished, he approached the window, and said in his nightingale's language, " I want to enter into a singing competition with you."

The cousins signified their willingness, and that it was for him to begin.

The nightingale commenced. He was a master nightingale. His throat swelled, his wings fluttered, his body trembled. The runs, the intricate passages, the arpeggios, the chromatic scales, seemed never-ending. He ran up and down the scale, he held on the notes, he rounded his cadences with discouraging purity : you would have said that his voice had wings like his body. He stopped, sure of victory.

The two cousins sang in their turn ; they surpassed themselves. By the side of theirs, the nightingale's song seemed but the chirping of a sparrow.

The winged *virtuoso* made a last effort. He sang a romance of love, then executed a brilliant fanfare, ending with a number of shrill and vibrating high notes beyond the range of the human voice.

Undismayed by this master stroke, the two cousins turned the leaves of their music-books, and replied to the nightingale in such a fashion that St. Cecilia, who was listening to them from the distant spheres of heaven, became pale with envy, and let her bass viol fall to the ground.

The nightingale tried to sing again, but the contest had entirely exhausted him : his breath failed him, his feathers were all ruffled ; in spite of himself his eyes closed ; he was dying.

" You sing better than I do," he said to the cousins. " The vanity of wishing to excel you has cost me my life. I ask one boon of you. I have a nest ; in the nest are three little ones ; it is the third wild-rose bush in the broad walk beside the lake. Have them fetched, bring them up, and teach them to sing as you do, for I am about to die."

So saying, the nightingale died. The two cousins wept for him bitterly, for he had sung well. They summoned Valentine, the little

fair-haired page, and told him where the nest was. Valentine, who was a clever little fellow, easily found the place ; he put the nest in his doublet, and brought it without accident. Fleurette and Isabeau, leaning against the balcony, impatiently awaited him. Valentine soon arrived, holding the nest in his hands. The three little ones put out their heads, opening their bills wide. The girls pitied the poor orphans, and fed each one in turn. When they were a little older, they began their musical education as they had promised the vanquished nightingale.

It was wonderful to see how tame they were, how well they sung. They flew about the room, perching now on Isabeau's head, now on Fleurette's shoulder. They placed themselves in front of the music-book, and you would have said that they were really able to make out the notes, they looked at the black and white keys with such an air of intelligence. They had learned all Fleurette's and Isabeau's tunes, and began to improvise very pretty ones themselves.

The two cousins lived more and more in solitude, and of an evening sounds of a supernatural melody were heard coming from their rooms. The nightingales, perfectly well educated, took part in the concert, and sang almost as well as their mistresses, who, themselves, had made great progress.

Every day their voices gained extraordinarily in brilliance, and vibrated in a metallic and crystalline fashion above the register of the natural voice. The girls grew visibly thinner ; they lost their fine colour, and became pale as agates, and almost as transparent. Sir Maulevrier tried to prevent their singing, but his entreaties were of no avail.

When they had sung a few bars, a little red spot made its appearance on their cheeks, and kept growing bigger and bigger until they had finished. Then the spot disappeared, but a cold perspiration flowed from their skin, and their lips trembled as though they had fever.

However, their singing was more beautiful than ever. It had something that was not of this world ; and to hear the sonorous and powerful voices coming from the two frail young girls, it was not difficult to foretell what would happen—the music would destroy the instrument.

They saw this themselves, and began to play on the virginal, an instrument they had neglected for their singing. But one night the

window was open, the birds were warbling in the park, the breeze was sighing harmoniously. There was so much music in the air that they could not resist the temptation of singing a duet that they had composed the day before.

It was the song of the swan, a marvellous song steeped in tears, ascending to the most inaccessible heights of the scale, and descending again to the lowest note ; a dazzling and marvellous song, a deluge of trills, a burning shower of chromatic passages, musical fireworks, not to be described. But the little red spot grew ever bigger, and almost covered their cheeks. The three nightingales looked at them, and listened with a strange anxiety ; their wings fluttered, they flew now here, now there, and could not keep still. At length the girls came to the last bars of the piece, and their voices assumed such a strange sort of sonority that it was easily seen that the singers were no longer living creatures. The nightingales had flown away. The two cousins were dead ; with the last note their souls had passed out from them. The nightingales ascended straight to heaven, in order to carry the supreme song to the good God, who kept them in Paradise to perform the music of the two cousins for His delight.

Later, the good God formed out of those three nightingales the souls of Palestrina, Cimarosa, and Gluck.

OCTAVE FEUILLET
1812-1890

CIRCE

SCENE—*The Countess's Boudoir.*

THE Countess. How do you do, Prince?

Prince. What, not out? Ah, I am fortunate, upon my word!

Countess. But you wrote me that you would come—

Prince. I wrote you that, really? Ah, that's odd. Ah, ah, that is amusing! Madame, your mother is well?

Countess. Very well—a little tired, that's all—she's just going up to her room. But sit down.

Prince (*seating himself*). Do you know what brings me here?

Countess. What?

Prince. I come to ask your advice. Imagine that I dined at the Embassy. They got talking about little drawing-room comedies, about *proverbs* or parables, about those little things, you know, that they play at private theatricals, and of the difficulty one experiences in finding any that are not too hackneyed, that one has not seen everywhere, and that are agreeable.

Countess. Yes—and then?

Prince. Very well, then. I was in rather a good humour; the spirit was upon me to compose during the week one of those witty trifles. A wager, serious enough, in fact, was connected with it. Briefly, since yesterday I have been thinking, without boring myself about other matters.

Countess. And you have hit upon something?

Prince. I have not yet thought of anything. But it will come. I conceived the idea of talking it over with you. We will do the thing together, if you are quite willing. It is very easy, you will see.

Countess. But I don't know, for my part, that it is so very easy.

Prince. Positively. Nothing more simple. Will you try?

Countess. Mon Dieu, I should like to—but you must hold the pen.

Prince. That's understood.

Countess. There, there's paper and ink—blue ink; is that all right?

Prince. Blue ink will do no harm. (*Places himself at a centre-table.*) There! Sit down in front of me, like a muse, and let us begin without further ceremony, will you?

Countess. Very willingly—but it's rather embarrassing, it seems to me.

Prince. Not at all. It's very easy. Always the same thing: Two people who chat about the rain and about fine weather—more or less wittily, as it happens to come. Well, are you ready?

Countess. Yes, yes—go on.

Prince. First we must write down the persons: "The Count, the Countess —," is it not?

Countess. Yes, of course—but is this to be a *proverbe*?

Prince. Yes, it's a *proverbe*.

Countess. But what *proverbe*? That must be decided first.

Prince. Oh! Mon Dieu, why? It's of no use—it will develop itself in time—it will evolve naturally from the conversation—it will be the finishing touch.

Countess. So be it. Go on.

Prince. "The Count, the Countess. First scene—" Well?

Countess. Hé!

Prince. What is it they say?

Countess. But what is the subject?

Prince. There is no subject! It is a witty trifle, I told you—a nothing—an improvisation without substance—a go-as-you-please conversation. I am not proposing that you should write a play like Molière's *Misanthrope*, remember.

Countess. Yet it is necessary to know what they are to talk about.

Prince. But about nothing—about trifles—you know how those things are!

Countess. But, no, my dear Prince, I know nothing about it—and no more do you, so it would seem.

Prince. Come, dear lady, don't let us quarrel. We said, "The Count and the Countess," is it not so? They are in the country—and the Count is bored, I suppose—

Countess. Yes, that's new enough.

Prince. I do not say that it must be new, but at any rate it is a

subject, since you must have one. So then, the Count is bored—and the Countess—the Countess—

Countess. Is bored too, perhaps?

Prince. It's an idea, and with that combination, too, may become original enough. They are both bored— Well, you see, dear madame, we are progressing. Let us pass on to the dialogue— That, that's the easiest— Once in the dialogue it will go by itself— "The Count—" The Count—he enters, doesn't he?

Countess. Quite right.

Prince. And in entering, he says—

Countess. He says?

Prince. What?

Countess. I am asking you.

Prince. Well—he might say, for instance, "Always alone, dear Countess?"

Countess. I see nothing inappropriate in that.

Prince. It's sufficiently the phrase of a bored man—"Always alone, dear Countess?"

Countess. It's a charming phrase— To which the Countess, who is always alone, replies?

Prince. Wait—yes—perhaps—that is to say, no—that will not do.

Countess. Instead of entering the diplomatic service you ought to devote yourself to literature—with your facility.

Prince (rising). It is certain that I am too beastly stupid—dumb as an animal— And then I am thinking of something else— Oh, well, I am going!

Countess. No!

Prince. I assure you that at other times I had a sort of wit— Inquire at the Embassy—they know— But I am altogether changed— Good-night, I am going.

Countess. No!

Prince. I am not going?

Countess. No, I tell you!

Prince. So be it. (*He sits down again.*)

Countess. Let us return. Where were we?— "The Count, the Countess—"

Prince. The truth is, you ought to consider me a regular imbecile.

Countess. Is it the Count says that?

Prince. No, it is I.

Countess. Not at all—I find you only a little odd.

Prince. Odd! You are very kind— But no, really; I beg of you to inquire at the Embassy—they will tell you that I do not lack intelligence, and that at other times I had even a sort of inspiration.

Countess. But, my Prince, I have no need to inquire at the Embassy, I have only to remember. I have known you to be extremely brilliant, several months ago when you were making love to me.

Prince. Brilliant, no; but I was as good as another at any rate.

Countess. Yes, yes, I insist— You were a brilliant young man, sparkling, dreadful!— (*She rubs her hands softly.*)

Prince. You are making fun of me— I was not sparkling, but I had some vivacity—and that was but two years ago! It is true that I had only just arrived at Paris—and that I had not yet passed under the influence of the climate.

Countess. You believe it was the climate—

Prince. What will you have? It must assuredly have been something— It isn't age— I am not thirty years old— At any rate, I think I shall leave Paris, and diplomacy as well— My mother sends for me from Vienna— I received a letter from her this morning— I wanted, also, to show it to you—

(*He fumbles about in his coat pocket and pulls out a letter half-tangled in some black lace.*)

Countess. What lace is that coming out of your pocket?

Prince (confused). Lace? Oh! Do you see some lace?

Countess. This— But I say, my Prince, is not this one of my veils, here?

Prince. One of your veils—here?— Are you sure?

Countess. Absolutely!— And I am going to take it back, too, if you will allow me— That's lace of great price, if you have your doubts about it.

Prince. I implore you to believe, indeed, madame, that I did not attach a mercenary value to it. But how do I come to have that veil about me?

Countess. It is very easy to explain. I must have left it at the Embassy on a visit, they charged you to return it to me, and with your usual absent-mindedness, you forgot the commission.

Prince. That's simple. I ask ten thousand pardons. It is perfectly evident! You see I am not myself at all any more. All my

faculties—even my memory—are weakening. It is high time I go to recover strength in my native air. You see what my mother tells me?

Countess (*running through the letter*). She has the air of a noble woman, your mother.

Prince. Yes. We two are very fond of each other. She advises me not to have too much success, poor mother! She believes me always irresistible.

Countess. Then you have been so, my Prince?

Prince. Why, yes, a little, up to the day I had the honour of meeting you— Well, what do you advise me?

Countess. To go, since your mother wishes to see you again.

Prince. That's my advice, too, and to tell you the truth, I came this evening specially to bid you good-bye.

Countess. What! to bid me good-bye?— And that *proverbe*? What was the object of that joke?

Prince. That *proverbe*? Come, madame, I want the last impression you receive of me to be pleasant. You will laugh. Here is the history of that *proverbe*. You remember well enough that which passed between us two years ago, after I had vainly offered you my heart and my hand. It so happened that if I wished to continue to regard you as a friend, I must sternly refrain from all allusions to a love definitely repulsed. I gave you my word on the matter, and I expected to have kept it scrupulously.

Countess. That is true.

Prince. Well, then, I made a mistake there. Excuse me, I swear to you that I am going. My discretion and my reserve naturally made you believe that I was cured of my love.

Countess. Naturally.

Prince. Yes. Well, it is a mistake. I love you always. I love you like a fool, like a child, like an angel, like a savage, as you will. Having decided to go away, I wished first to make one supreme effort, a desperate one. The idea of that *proverbe* came to me. Under cover of that *proverbe* I promised myself to set my feelings before you, with so much fire, emotion, eloquence, wit, that you would be infallibly softened, fascinated and overcome. You have seen how successful I was!— Isn't it comic?— Now, madame, adieu.

Countess. Adieu, Prince.

Prince. One word more. Be gracious enough to tell me why you refused to marry me. My proposal was, in fact, perfectly honest and

perfectly worthy of acceptance. Why did you repulse it with so much decision? Was it from caprice, from antipathy, or did you have some serious reason?

Countess. I had a serious reason.

Prince. You loved some one?

Countess. No one.

Prince. Then your heart was free, like your hand. You had not been—you told me so yourself—particularly happy with your husband—although he was charming, from what they say.

Countess. He was charming, altogether charming, sparkling and irresistible—like you—in days gone by.

Prince. In short, you were not happy; consequently, you had no occasion to torment yourself if you became unfaithful to the memory of the dead. As for me, I had a brilliant name, a fortune, a position. At that time I was not ill and depressed as I am now. I was tolerable in my person.

Countess. Very handsome, indeed.

Prince. I passed for a sufficiently lively talker. I made court to you, if I remember, with—intelligence.

Countess. With much, much wit.

Prince. And you refused me!—Come, now, why?

Countess. You do not guess?

Prince. Not at all.

Countess (*she takes his hand and looks him tenderly in the eyes*). It is because I love dumb animals, my friend.

SAVING THE FLAG

OCTAVE FEUILLET

LAST night, after dinner, we scattered in the garden of the château to breathe the cool night air, mingled with the scent of roses and cigars. All the guests chatted in low voices, as though subdued by the beauty of the evening. It was warm and superb. A dazzling moon filled the vast garden with her limpid brightness; there was a glaze of silver on the water of the lake, in the middle of which two large swans slept motionless in their snowy whiteness. Talking a little about nothing in particular, we came and went, Commandant d'Eblis and I, between the end of the lake and the nearest trees of the avenue that formed, in the midst of all the light, a nave as sombre as a cathedral at midnight. After a silence, I said to Monsieur d'Eblis :

"This sweet and peaceful scene must contrast strangely with your memories of the war, Commandant !"

"Have you the gift of second sight ?" he said, stopping in his walk.

"I have hardly the gift of first sight," I said laughingly, "for I am short-sighted. But why this question, Monsieur ?"

"Because at this very moment my mind went back to a scene in my military career—an evening just like this, but less beautiful, though quite as peaceful."

"Would you mind telling me ? . . ."

He hesitated, breathed deeply, and then with a slight bow :

"Oh, heavens ! Yes. I was then below Metz. On the evening of which I speak, the 27th of October, I had been charged with carrying some orders, the meaning of which appeared only too clear to me. I had, in particular, to stop in its march one of our regiments, whose number I have forgotten. In fact, I had overtaken it and stopped it. I was going to set off again. I was waiting only till my blown horse had recovered a little. We were then in a plain close to a village called Colombey, I think. The dreadful storms that marked those sinister days had quietened down for a few hours. A tranquil moon

was reflected in the pools of water that covered the country. Our imagination brings some strange things together. There is certainly little connection between the smiling scene that surrounds us here and those desolate swamps ; yet this moonlight on the water just now reminded me of them, . . . and the lovely swans, sleeping over there, made me think of my escort of dragoons, motionless, like them, in their white cloaks.

"The regiment, while waiting for the new instructions, kept its formation, rifle in hand. A big bivouac fire had been lighted, and round it some officers were talking in low voices with mournful looks. Rumours of surrender had spread through the camps since the evening before. The colonel, an oldish man, with dark grey moustache, strode up and down by himself some distance away, clenching in his hand the order I had brought him. Suddenly he came up to me and gripped me by the arm.

" ' Captain,' he said to me in the tone of a man who is going to provoke a deadly quarrel with another, ' a word or two with you, please ! . . . You come from headquarters ; you must know more than I do. . . . It is the end, isn't it ? '

" ' They say so, Colonel, and I believe it.'

" ' You believe it ! How can you believe such a thing ? '

" He let go my arm with some violence, walked away, and, coming back abruptly, looked me in the eyes.

" ' Prisoners, then ? '

" ' Colonel, I am afraid so.'

" There was another silence ; he stayed some time in front of me in an attitude of deep thought ; then lifting his head he said with an extraordinary feeling in his voice :

" ' And the flags ? '

" ' I don't know, Colonel.'

" ' Ah ! You don't know ? '

" Again he left me, and walked by himself for five or six minutes. Striding then up to his regiment, he said in a tone of command :

" ' The flag ! '

" The non-commissioned officer who carried the flag came out from the ranks. The colonel seized the staff with one hand, and raising the other to the group of drummers :

" ' Open a ban ! ' he said.

" The drums sounded.

"The colonel came up to the fire, carrying the flag on high; he dropped the staff on the ground, looked at the circle of officers, and uncovered his head. They all imitated him at once; the men, attentive, remained as silent as the dead.

"He then had a moment of hesitation. I saw his lips tremble. His eyes stared with an expression of anguish at the glorious scrap of torn silk—sad symbol of the Motherland. At last he came to a decision: bending the knee, he slowly put the eagle into the fire. A brighter flame suddenly flared up and lighted more clearly the pale faces of the officers. Some of them were weeping.

" 'Close the ban!' said the colonel; and for the second time there sounded the mournful roll of drumskins soaked by the rain.

"He put on his cap and came towards me.

" 'Captain,' he said to me in a hard voice, 'when you go back there—have no scruple—none—tell them what you have seen! Good-bye.'

" 'Colonel,' I said to him, 'will you allow me to embrace you?'

"He drew me violently to his breast, and stifling me with his clasp, 'Ah! My poor boy!' he murmured. 'My poor boy!'"

Monsieur d'Eblis turned his head from me when he reached the end of his tale, and I heard a sob. I took his hand.

"Ah," he said, "you understand what a man suffers in a moment like that!"

CONSTANT GUÉROULT

B. 1814

AFTER THE CRIME

IT was at the extremity of a village : a window was hurriedly thrown open, and a man appeared at it, his features livid, his eyes haggard, his lips agitated by a convulsive tremor ; his right hand grasped a knife from which blood was dripping, drop by drop. He cast a look into the silent country, then sprang to the ground and set off running away through the fields.

At the end of a quarter of an hour he stopped exhausted, breathless, at the edge of a wood, twenty paces from the highway. He searched for the most closely grown and most impenetrable spot to be found and pressed his way into it, regardless of the thorns that were tearing him ; then he began to dig up the earth with his knife. When he made a hole a foot deep, he placed the weapon in it, and covered it with the soil he had dug out, re-covered it with a grass sod, which he trampled down solidly, after which he sat down upon the wet grass.

He listened, and appeared terrified by the silence which hung upon the country.

It was the hour when the darkness of night is replaced by that grey and uniform tint which is neither day nor night, and through which objects look like phantoms.

It seemed to him that he was alone in this funereal immensity, in the midst of this dumb and dim nature. Suddenly a sound made him start ; it was the axle of a waggon creaking on the road, a league away perhaps ; but in the silence this strange and discordant noise made itself heard with singular distinctness.

Then nature awoke little by little. The lark took flight towards the blue sky, pouring out his notes, at once timid and charming, overflowing with life and happiness ; a winged tribe began to sing and flutter amid the leaves glittering with dew ; on all sides—in the moss on which the golden insect was crawling, to the branch of the highest oak, where the bird voluptuously plumed herself in the ether—arose a morning concert, so harmonious in its confusion, so potent in its

delirium, so full of greeting to the first rays coming from the east, that it might well be called a hymn to the sun.

Nature expanded herself, radiant and virginal ; all was grace, freshness, sparkle in the forest, where a blue mist still floated ; all was calm and hushed in the plain, the great lines of which undulated to infinity, the grey tones of which grew light under the reflection of the blue sky.

The murderer rose ; his limbs trembled, and his teeth clattered one against the other.

He cast furtive glances around him, then parted the branches with precaution, stopping, starting, drawing back his head hastily at the least sound : then, at length, he quitted the densely grown thicket in which he had buried his knife.

He pressed forward deeper into the forest, choosing always the most shaded portions and avoiding the open parts and the beaten paths, making frequent stoppages to listen or to examine the ground before him ere he advanced. In this way he walked all day without being conscious of fatigue—so great was the agony which dominated him.

He paused at the entrance to a grove of beeches, whose imposing trunks stood white and smooth, like thousands of columns crowned with foliage. A calm day, a harmonious silence, added to the impression of grandeur and retirement made by this beautiful spot ; something animate seemed to throb amid the luminous shade of the motionless boughs, as if a soul were there amid the shadows, murmuring mysterious syllables.

The fugitive felt ill at ease, and, creeping like a reptile, forced his way under a clump of thorn bushes, the density of which completely hid him.

When he was in safety, he first raised his hand to his head and then to his stomach, and muttered, " I am hungry ! "

The sound of his voice made him shudder ; it was the first time he had heard it since the murder, and it resounded in his ears like a knell and a menace. For some moments he remained motionless and held his breath, as if in fear of having been heard.

When he had become a little calmer, he felt in his pockets one after the other ; they contained a few *sous*.

" That will be enough," he said in a low tone ; " in six hours I shall have crossed the frontier ; then I can show myself ; I can work, and shall be saved."

At the end of an hour he felt the cold begin to stiffen his limbs,

for with the coming of night the dew fell, and his only clothes were a linen blouse and trousers of the same material. He rose, and cautiously quitting his thorn bushes, continued his march. He halted at the first signs of dawn. He had reached the limits of the forest, and must now enter upon the open country, must show himself in the full light of day ; and, struck with terror by this thought, he dared not advance a step farther.

While he was standing hidden in a thicket the sound of horses' hoofs was heard. He turned pale.

" Gendarmes ! " he gasped, crouching down upon the ground.

It was a farm-labourer going to the fields, with two horses harnessed to a waggon ; he was whistling a country air while re-tying the lash of his whip.

" Jacques ! " a voice cried to him.

The peasant turned round.

" Hallo ! is that you, Françoise ? Where are you going so early ? "

" Oh ! I'm going to wash this bundle of linen at the spring close by."

" I'm going within two steps of it ; put your bundle on one of my beasts."

" Thanks !—that's not to be refused. How's the wife and the little ones—all of them ? "

" I'm the weakest of the family," replied Jacques, laughing loudly ; " all goes well—work, joy, and health."

He tied his lash, and the sharp crack was repeated by echo after echo.

The murderer followed him with his eyes as far as he could see him ; then a deep sigh escaped from his lips, and his gaze turned to the open country spreading before him.

" I must get on," he murmured, " it is twenty-four hours since I——. All is discovered, I am being sought, an hour's delay may ruin me."

He made up his mind resolutely, and quitted the forest.

At the end of ten minutes he came within sight of a church tower. Then he slackened his pace, a prey to a thousand conflicting feelings, drawn towards the village by hunger, restrained by the fear which counselled him to avoid habitations.

However, after a long struggle, during which he had advanced as much as possible under the screen of outhouses and bushes, he was

about to enter the village, when he saw something glitter about a hundred paces from him.

It was the brass badge and the pommel of a rural policeman's sabre.

"He may have my description," he murmured with a shudder.

And, shrinking back quickly, he ran to a little wood which extended on his left and hid himself in it, pushing farther and farther into its depths, forgetting his hunger, and thinking only of flying from the village and the rural policeman.

But he speedily reached the end of the wood, which was of very small extent : beyond, the plain began again.

On peering from between the branches he saw a man seated on the grass eating his breakfast. It was Jacques, the farm-labourer.

Nothing could be more pleasant than the corner he had chosen for his breakfast-room. It was a sort of little stony ravine, through which ran two deep wheel-ruts, but carpeted with grass and moss and bordered with creepers, green-leaved, yellow, or purple, according to the caprices of that powerful colourist called Autumn. The wheel-ruts were full of limpid water, at the bottom of which glittered little white stones, smooth and transparent as onyx. Finally, this pretty nest was shaded by a cluster of birch-trees with reddish silvery trunks and foliage light and trembling.

Above this oasis spread ploughed fields on which hung, white and closely woven, the "Virgin-threads," floating and sparkling like an immense silver net.

Jacques' breakfast consisted of a hunch of bread and a piece of cheese, washed down with big draughts of cider claret, which he drank out of a stone pitcher, cooled in the water of the wheel-ruts.

The peasant's strong white teeth buried themselves in the bread with an appetite which might have made a capitalist desire to share his frugal meal, which he only interrupted now and then to give a friendly word to his two horses, which, a few paces off, were feeding in brotherly fashion from the same wisp of hay.

"He's happy—he is !" murmured the murderer. Then, from the depths of his conscience he added : "Yes ! work !—love of family !—peace and happiness are there !"

He was tempted to accost Jacques and ask him for a piece of bread ; but a glance at his tattered dress forbade him showing himself ; and then it seemed to him that his features bore the stamp of his crime, and must denounce him to whoever looked upon him.

A sound made him turn his head, and through the branches he saw an old man covered with rags. He walked bent double, a stick in his hand and a canvas bag slung to his neck by a cord. It was a beggar.

The murderer watched him with envious eyes, and again he murmured :

"What would I not give to be in his place ! He begs, but he is free ; he goes where he pleases in the wide air, in the broad sunlight with a calm heart, with a tranquil conscience, eating without fear an agony the bread given to him in charity ; able to look behind him without seeing a dead body, beside him without dreading to find a gendarme at his elbow, before him without seeing a vision of the scaffold. Yes, he is happy, that old mendicant, and I may well envy him his lot."

Suddenly he turned pale, a nervous trembling agitated all his limbs, and his features were drawn up like those of an epileptic.

"There they are !" he stammered, his eyes fixed upon a point on the road.

With haggard eye, bewildered, mad with terror, he looked on all sides, seeking to find a place of concealment ; but so strangely was he overcome by fear that his eyes saw nothing, and his mind was incapable of thought.

During this time the gendarmes approached rapidly.

The gallop of the horses and the clanking of arms suddenly brought back to him his presence of mind, and, seeing before him an elm, the foliage of which was dense enough to hide him from sight, he climbed up it with the agility of a squirrel.

He was in safety when the two gendarmes halted on the road a few paces from him.

He listened, motionless, terrified, a prey to emotion so violent that he could hear the beating of the heart within him.

"What if we search this wood !" said one of the gendarmes.

"It's too small," said the other ; "it's not there that our man would take refuge—rather in a forest."

"Anyhow, it will be prudent to beat it up."

"No," replied his comrade, "it would be time lost, and the assassin has already a ten hours' start of us."

And they went on at a trot.

The murderer breathed again ; he felt a renewed life. But, this

agony passed, a suffering, for a moment forgotten, made itself felt anew, and he cried :

“ My God, how hungry I am ! ”

He had not eaten for forty-eight hours.

His legs gave way under him ; he was seized with giddiness and a humming in the ears. And yet, he no more thought of going to the village for bread. The gendarmes ! the scaffold ! Those two phantoms ceaselessly rose before him, and overmastered even the pangs of famine.

While his restless ears were on the watch for all sounds in the country, the dreary tolling of a bell made him start : it was the bell of the village church sounding the funeral knell. The murderer listened, pale, downcast, shuddering at every stroke, as if the clapper of the bell had struck upon his heart. Then big tears fell slowly from his eyes, and streamed down his cheeks unobserved by him, without his making any attempt to stop their flow.

It was because these funeral sounds evoked in his imagination a picture at once terrible and heart-rending. At that same hour the bell of another village church was tolling like this for another death.

“ Oh, wretch, wretch that I am ! ” sighed the murderer, covering his face with both his hands.

He listened again to the strokes of the church bell, which sounded to him like the sobs of the poor victim, and he murmured :

“ Oh, idleness ! it led me to the tavern—and the tavern, this is what has come of it !—three orphans, a poor wife in the ground, and I ! —a monster, hateful to all, hunted like a wild beast, pursued without rest or truce, until the hour when they shall have driven me to the scaffold. Horrible, horrible destiny !—and yet too mild a punishment.”

He remained in the tree until night had come. When he saw the stars shine in the sky, when, in the vast solitude around him, he heard nothing but that vague breathing which seems like the respiration of the sleeping earth, then only he ventured to descend to rest himself.

He stretched himself at the foot of the tree, and closed his eyes ; but fear which would not quit him, hunger which gnawed at his vitals, kept him constantly awake, and he rose at the first sign of dawn, overwhelmed, bowed down at once by alarm, fatigue, and the fasting of nearly three days.

At the end of a few hours his hunger, sharpened by the exciting air

of the wood, ended by overcoming all his terror ; and, feeling that his reason was beginning to reel in his brain, he decided to go into the village in search of bread.

He shook off the blades of grass which hung to his clothes, re-tied his neckerchief, passed his fingers through his tangled hair, then resolutely went out into the plain. Five minutes afterwards he entered the village, walking slowly, his head bent down, like a man overcome by fatigue, but casting a furtive and suspicious glance right and left, and ready to take flight at the first appearance of danger.

Not far from the church—that is to say, in the centre of the place—he perceived a tavern, the patriarchal aspect of which seemed to him to be reassuring. After convincing himself that neither cries nor disputes were coming from it—evidence that it was almost empty—he made up his mind to enter.

“What can I give you, my good man ? ” asked the landlord, a solidly built peasant, with broad shoulders, and a frank and open countenance.

“Bread and wine,” replied the murderer, going and seating himself at a table near a window opening on to a garden.

He was speedily served.

“Here you are ! ” said the landlord, “bread, wine, and cheese.”

“I only asked for bread and wine,” said the murderer abruptly, hiding his face in his hands.

“Oh ! the cheese is of no consequence to me, nor the bread either, for—no offence to you—you don’t look too well off, my poor man, and it seems to me that you need to get up your strength ; so eat and drink without worrying yourself about the rest.”

“Thanks, thanks ! ”

At that moment the church bells began to ring loudly.

“What is that ? ” asked the murderer. “Why are the bells ringing in that way ? ”

“Why ! Because the mass is over.”

“The mass ! What is to-day, then ? ”

“Sunday. You are not a Christian, then ? Oh ! you’ll have companions presently.”

The murderer felt himself becoming faint. He was tempted to rush out of the house ; but a moment’s reflection convinced him that such a course would ensure his certain destruction, and that prudence itself called on him to remain where he was.

He had hardly come to this decision when drinkers flocked into the tavern, which presently became full. The murderer began to eat and drink, taking care to keep his face turned towards the window, so as to hide his features as much as possible.

A quarter of an hour passed, an age of torment and anxiety for the fugitive, whom the most insignificant word caused to turn pale and to shudder. At length he was going to rise and leave the tavern, when one of the drinkers cried :

"Hallo ! here comes Daddy Fauchaux, our brigadier of gendarmerie ! "

The murderer started frightfully, and his right hand flew to his head ; all his blood had rushed to his heart, and from his heart to his brain, as if he had been stricken with apoplexy.

He came to himself little by little, but without recovering his powers ; from the shock he had sustained there remained a weakness and nervous tremor which rendered him wholly incapable of effort.

On seeing the brigadier enter, he leaned his head upon the table, and pretended to fall asleep.

The welcome given to the gendarme attested the esteem in which he was held in the country ; every one was eager to offer him a place at his table.

"Thanks, friends," replied Daddy Fauchaux, "a glass is not to be refused ; but, as to sitting down, and taking it easy with you—the service forbids."

"The service ! that's a good one. To-day is Sunday, and thieves require a day of rest as well as other folks."

"Thieves, possibly ; but it's different with assassins."

"Assassins ! What do you mean by that, Daddy Fauchaux ? "

"Haven't you heard about the affair at Saint Didier ? "

"No ; tell us about it."

"The more willingly, because I came in here to give you all a description of the scoundrel we are hunting."

The heart of the murderer throbbed heavily enough, to burst his chest.

"He's a stonemason, named Pierre Picard," the brigadier continued.

"And who has he murdered ? "

"His wife."

"The beggar ! What had she done to him ? "

"Cried without complaining when he beat her ; only sometimes she went to the tavern to ask him to give her some money and buy food for her little ones, whom she could not bear to see dying of starvation. That was the whole of her crime, poor creature ! It was for that he killed her on Thursday night last. She was only five-and-twenty. He ought to have kissed the ground she walked on, the wretch ! She spent her life in working and caring for him and the children, and she had never received any other reward save blows and misery."

"The infernal villain !" cried a young man, striking his fist violently on the table before him ; "I'd think it a pleasure to go and see his head chopped off."

"That's why you all ought to know his description, so as to be able to arrest him if you came upon him ; for we know that he is skulking somewhere hereabouts."

There was a deep silence.

The murderer, he too listened, mastering by a superhuman effort the fever raging in his blood and bewildering his brain.

"This is the description of Pierre Picard," said the brigadier, unfolding a paper : "Middle height, short neck, broad shoulders, high cheek bones, large nose, black eyes, sandy beard, thin lips, a brown mole on the forehead."

Folding up the paper, he added :

"Now you'll be sure to recognise him if you meet him !"

"With such a description, it would be impossible to mistake him."

"Then, as the song says, 'good-night, my friends' ; I leave you to go and hunt my game."

The murderer ceased to breathe. While listening to the brigadier's departure, he calculated that a few hours only separated him from the frontier, and already he saw himself in safety.

He was about raising his head, when the heavy boots of the gendarme, taking a new direction, resounded suddenly in his ears.

The gendarme stopped, two paces from the table at which he was seated ; and the murderer *felt* his look turned upon him.

His blood seemed to freeze in his veins. A cold perspiration burst from all his pores, and his heart appeared to him to cease beating.

"By the way," cried the brigadier, "here's a party who is sleeping pretty soundly."

And he struck him on the shoulder.

"Hallo, my friend, hold your head up a little; I want to see your phiz."

Pierre Picard raised his head sharply; the expression of his face was frightful. His livid features were horribly contracted, his blood-shot eyes darted flames, and a nervous trembling agitated his thin and close-pressed lips.

"It's he!" cried ten voices at once.

The brigadier put out his hand to seize him by the collar, but before he could touch him, the murderer struck him two heavy blows with his fist in the eyes and blinded him; then, springing through the window into the garden, he disappeared.

Recovered from the surprise which had at first paralysed them, twenty young men dashed off in pursuit of him. At a bound he cleared the garden hedge, gained the fields, and in less than ten minutes was half a league away from the village.

After making sure that the unevenness of the ground prevented him from being seen, he paused for a moment to take breath, for he was quite exhausted and would have sunk down senseless if this furious flight had continued twenty seconds longer.

But he had hardly seated himself, before confused cries struck upon his ears. He rose and listened.

It was his pursuers.

What was he to do? Exhausted, breathless, he could run no farther—and they were there, on his heels. He cast a desperate glance around him. Everywhere he saw the level plain—without a rock, without a hollow, without a clump of trees, in which he could hide himself. Suddenly his eyes fell upon a shining pool of standing water, on the margin of which there was a growth of tall reeds, and he gasped:

"Let's try it."

He dragged himself to the pool, in which he hid himself up to the neck, drawing over his head the reeds and water-plants, then remained as motionless as if he had taken root in the mud.

The water had become still and smooth as a mirror when the twenty peasants arrived at the edge of the pool, preceded by the brigadier, who, thanks to the care of the landlord of the tavern, had speedily recovered from the stunning effects of the blows he had received.

"Now," cried Daddy Fauchaux, from the back of his horse, and

examining the country in all directions, "where in the name of wonder can that scoundrel have got to!"

"It's odd," said a young peasant; "five minutes ago I saw him plainly—and, now, not a glimpse of him! and yet the ground's flat and green for three leagues round, without so much as a mole's hole in which he could hide his nose."

"He can't be far off," said the brigadier. "Let us divide and spread over the plain, searching every bit of it, and coming back here last."

Pierre Picard heard the party disperse, uttering threats against him.

Still standing motionless in the pool, he trembled in every limb, and dared not change his position for fear of betraying his presence by agitating the water about him, or by deranging the reeds and water-plants with which he had covered his head.

He passed an hour in this position, studying the sound of the steps crossing each other on the plain, of which his ears, eagerly strained, caught the least perceptible echoes.

At the end of that time the whole of the party were again collected about the pool.

"Thunder and lightning!" cried the brigadier, furiously; "the brigand has escaped us, but how the plague could he have done it?"

"He must be a sorcerer!" said a peasant.

"Sorcerer or not, I'll not give him up," replied Daddy Fauchoux. "I'll just give Sapajou time to swallow a mouthful of water at this pool, and we'll both slip off to the edge of the frontier, towards which the beggar is sure to make his way."

And turning his horse towards the pool, he reined him up just at the spot where the fugitive was hidden amid the tuft of reeds. The animal stretched forward his neck, sniffed the air strongly, then quickly drew back his head and refused to advance. Pierre Picard felt the beast's warm breath upon his cheek.

The brigadier gently flipped Sapajou's ears to force him to enter the pool, but the animal backed a couple of paces, and his master was unable, either by blows or patings, to induce him to obey.

"Oh! we are in our tantrums!" cried the brigadier, furious at a resistance to which he was wholly unused; "we'll see which of us is going to give in to the other."

And he was preparing to flog poor Sapajou severely, when, as if

understanding the impending danger, the animal wheeled suddenly to the left and entered the pool some paces farther off.

"That's all the better for you," said the brigadier. Then, while his horse was drinking, he said to the peasants :

"Now, my good fellows, you can go back to the village ; I and Sapajou will see to the rest."

The peasants moved off, wishing him good luck. Then the horse, having sufficiently satisfied his thirst, left the water and set off across the fields, stimulated by the voice of his master.

The murderer was left alone.

But, though he was benumbed with cold, he allowed more than a quarter of an hour to pass before venturing to quit his retreat. At length he came from the pool, dripping with water, his head and shoulders covered with water-grass and plants which clung to his skin and clothes, his body shivering, his face cadaverous. He cast a long glance over the deserted plain, and tried to speak, but his teeth clattered together so violently that it was some moments before he could articulate a word.

"Saved !" he gasped at length.

Then he continued, with profound dejection :

"Yes, saved—for the hour ! But the brigadier waits for me on the frontier ; the gendarmerie are warned, the whole population are on foot ; the hunt is going to begin again against the common enemy—against the mad dog. The struggle—for ever the struggle—without cessation, without pity ! All men against me, and God as well ! It is too much—it is beyond my strength !"

While speaking he mechanically freed himself from the slimy weeds with which he was covered.

He gazed upon the solitude by which he was surrounded, and it appeared to terrify him : he seemed to feel in his heart the same cold, sullen, desolate solitude.

Then he took his head between his hands, and for five minutes remained plunged in his reflections.

"So be it," he said at length, in a resolute tone.

And he set off in the direction of the village from which he had fled.

An hour afterwards he entered the tavern where the brigadier had been so near capturing him.

All the peasants who had pursued him were there.

"The assassin!" they cried in bewilderment.

"Yes," replied the murderer, calmly, "it is Pierre Picard, the assassin, who has come to give himself up. Go and find the gendarmes."

He seated himself in the middle of the tavern, calm and unmoved.

Two gendarmes speedily arrived. Pierre Picard recognised them as those who, the evening before, had passed close by the elm in which he had taken refuge. He held out his hands to them silently. They placed handcuffs upon his wrists, and led him to a room at the *Mairie*, which was to serve provisionally as his dungeon, before he was transferred to the neighbouring city.

When he found himself alone, shut up securely in this prison, the door of which was guarded by two gendarmes, the murderer sank upon his camp bed, and cried with a sort of fierce enjoyment :

"At last I can rest!"

LÉO LESPÈS
1815-1875

THE MIRROR

LETTER I

YOU wish me to write to you, my dear Anaïs—me, a poor blind creature whose hand moves falteringly in the darkness? Are you not afraid of the sadness of my letters, written as they are in gloom? Have you no fear of the sombre thoughts which must beset the blind?

Dear Anaïs, *you* are happy; you can see. To see! Oh, to see! to be able to distinguish the blue sky, the sun, and all the different colours—what a joy! True, I once enjoyed this privilege, but when I was struck with blindness, I was scarcely ten years old. Now I am twenty-five. It is fifteen long years since everything around me became as black as night! In vain, dear friend, do I endeavour to recall the wonders of nature. I have forgotten all her hues. I smell the scent of the rose, I guess its shape by the touch; but its boasted colour, to which all beautiful women are compared, I have forgotten—or, rather, I cannot describe. Sometimes under this thick veil of darkness strange gleams flit. The doctors say that this is the movement of the blood, and that this may give some promise of a cure. Vain delusion! When one has lost for fifteen years the lights which beautify the earth, they are never to be found again except in heaven.

The other day I had a rare sensation. In groping in my room I put my hand upon—oh! you would never guess!—upon a mirror! I sat down in front of it, and arranged my hair like a coquette. Oh! what would I have given to be able to regard myself!—to know if I was nice!—if my skin is as white as it is soft, and if I have pretty eyes under my long lashes!—Ah! they often told us at school that the devil comes in the glasses of little girls who look at themselves too long! All I can say is, if he came in mine he must have been nicely caught—my lord Satan. I couldn't have seen him!

You ask me in your kind letter, which they have just read to me, whether it is true that the failure of a banker has ruined my parents. I have heard nothing about it. No, they are rich. I am supplied

with every luxury. Everywhere that my hand rests it touches silk and velvet, flowers and precious stuffs. Our table is abundant, and every day my taste is coaxed with dainties. Therefore, you see, Anaïs, that my beloved folks are happily well off.

Write to me, my darling, since you are now back from that aristocratic England, and you have some pity for the poor blind girl.

LETTER II

You have no idea, Anaïs, what I am going to tell you! Oh! you will laugh as if you had gone crazy. You will believe that with my sight I must have lost my reason. I have a lover!

Yes, dear; I, the girl without eyes, have a wooer as melting and as importunate as the lover of a duchess. After this, what is to be said? Love, who is as blind as blind can be, undoubtedly owed me this as one of his own kind.

How *he* got in amongst us I don't know; still less, what he is going to do here. All I can tell you is that he sat on my left at dinner the other day, and that he looked after me with extreme care and attention.

"This is the first time," I said, "that I have had the honour of meeting you."

"True," he answered, "but I know your parents."

"You are welcome," I replied, "since you know how to esteem them—my good angels!"

"They are not the only people," he continued softly, "for whom I feel affection."

"Oh," I answered thoughtlessly, "then whom else here do you like?"

"You," said he.

"Me? What do you mean?"

"That I love you."

"Me? You love *me*?"

"Truly! Madly!"

At these words I blushed, and pulled my scarf over my shoulders. He sat quite silent.

"You are certainly abrupt in your announcement."

"Oh! it might be seen in my regards, my gestures, all my actions."

"That may be, but I am blind. A blind girl is not wooed as others are."

“ What do I care about the want of sight ? ” said he, with a delightful accent of sincerity ; “ what matters it to me if your eyes are closed to the light ? Is not your figure charming, your foot as tiny as a fairy’s, your step superb, your tresses long and silky, your skin of alabaster, your complexion carmine, and your hand the colour of the lily ? ”

He had finished his description before his words ceased sounding in my ears. So then, I had, according to him, a beautiful figure, a fairy foot, a snowy skin, a complexion like a rose, and fair and silky hair. Oh, Anaïs, dear Anaïs, to other girls such a lover, who describes all your perfections, is nothing but a suitor ; but to a blind girl he is more than a lover, he is a mirror.

I began again : “ Am I really as pretty as all that ? ”

“ I am still far from the reality.”

“ And what would you have me do ? ”

“ I want you to be my wife.”

I laughed aloud at this idea.

“ Do you mean it ? ” I cried. “ A marriage between the blind and the seeing, between the day and the night ? Why, I should have to put my orange-blossoms on by groping ! No ! no ! my parents are rich : a single life has no terrors for me ; single I will remain, and take the service of Diana, as they say—and so much the worse for her if she is waited on amiss ! ”

He went away without saying a word more. It is all the same : he has taught me that I am nice ! I don’t know how it is that I catch myself loving him a little, Mr. Mirror mine !

LETTER III

Oh, dear Anaïs, what news I have to tell you ! What sad and unexpected things befall us in this life ! As I tell you what has happened to me, the tears are falling from my darkened eyes.

Several days after my conversation with the stranger whom I call *my mirror*, I was walking in the garden, leaning on my mother’s arm, when she was suddenly and loudly called for. It seemed to me that the maid, in haste to find my mother, betrayed some agitation in her voice.

“ What is the matter, mother ? ” I asked her, troubled without knowing why.

" Nothing, love ; some visitor, no doubt. In our position we owe something to society."

" In that case," I said, embracing her, " I will not keep you any longer. Go and do the honours of the drawing-room."

She pressed two icy lips upon my forehead. Then I heard her footsteps on the gravel path receding in the distance.

She had hardly left me when I thought I heard the voices of two neighbours—two workmen—who were chatting together, thinking they were alone. You know, Anaïs, when God deprives us of one of our faculties, he seems, in order to console us, to make the others keener ; the blind man has his hearing sharper than his whose gaze can traverse space. I did not lose a word of their remarks, although they spoke in a low tone. And this is what they said :

" Poor things ! how sad ! The brokers in again ! "

" And the girl has not the least suspicion. She never guesses that they take advantage of her loss of sight to make her happy."

" What do you mean ? "

" There isn't any doubt about it. All that her hand touches is of mahogany or velvet ; only the velvet has grown shabby and the mahogany has lost its lustre. At table she enjoys the most delicious dishes without dreaming, in her innocence, that the domestic misery is kept concealed from her, and that alongside of that very table her father and mother seldom have anything except dry bread."

Oh, Anaïs, you can understand my agony ! They have practised on me for my happiness ; they have made me live in luxury amidst my darkness—and me alone. Oh ! marvellous devotion. All the wealth which a most grateful heart can offer cannot pay this everlasting debt.

LETTER IV

I have not told any one that I have guessed this sad yet charming secret. My mother would be overwhelmed to learn that all her trouble to conceal her poverty from me has been useless. I still affect a firm belief in the flourishing condition of our house. But I am determined to save it.

M. de Sauves, as my lover is called, came to see me—and, may Heaven forgive me !—I set myself to play the coquette with him.

So I said : " Have you still the same esteem for me ? "

"Yes," said he. "I love you because you are beautiful with the noblest beauty, which is pure and modest."

"And my figure?"

"As exquisite and graceful as a vine."

"Ah! and my forehead?"

"Large and smooth as the ivory which it outshines."

"Really?" And I began to laugh.

"What makes you so merry?"

"An idea—that you are my mirror. I see myself reflected in your words."

"Dearest, I would that it might be so always."

"Would you agree, then—?"

"To be your faithful mirror, to reflect your qualities, your virtues. Consent to be my wife. I have some fortune; you shall want for nothing, and I will strive with all my power to make you happy."

At these words I thought of my poor parents, whom my marriage would relieve of an enormous burden.

"If I consent to marry you," I answered, "your self-love, as a man, would suffer. I could not see you."

"Alas!" he cried, "I owe you a confession."

"Go on," I said.

"I am a graceless child of nature. I have neither charm of countenance nor dignity of carriage. To crown my misfortune, a scourge, nowadays made powerless by the art of vaccination, has mercilessly scarred my features. In marrying a blind girl, therefore, I show that I am selfish and without humility."

I held out my hand to him.

"I don't know whether you are too hard on yourself, but I believe you to be good and true. Take me, then, such as I am. Nothing, at any rate, will turn my thoughts from yours. Your love will be an oasis in the desert of my night."

Am I doing right, or wrong? I know not, dear Anaïs, but I am going to my parents' rescue. Perhaps, in my groping, I have found the right way.

LETTER V

I thank you for your kind friendliness, for the compliments and congratulations with which your letter is filled.

Yes, I have been married for two months, and I am the happiest

of women. I have nothing to desire ; idolised by my husband and adored by my parents, who have not left me, I do not regret my infirmity, since Edmond sees for both of us.

The day I was married, my mirror—as I call him—reflected complacently my bridal pomp. Thanks to it, I knew that my veil was nicely made, and that my wreath of orange-blossoms was not all on one side. What could a Venetian mirror have done more ?

In the evening we walk out together in the gardens, and he makes me admire the flowers by their perfume, the birds by their song, the fruit by its taste and its soft touch. Sometimes we go to the theatre, and there, too, he reproduces, by his wit, all that my closed eyes cannot see. Oh ! what does his ugliness matter to me ? I no longer know what is beautiful, or what is ugly, but I *do* know what is kind and loving.

Farewell, then, dear Anaïs, rejoice in my happiness.

LETTER VI

I am a mother, Anaïs, the mother of a little girl, and I can't see her ! They say she looks sweet enough to eat. They make out that she is a living miniature of me, and I can't admire her ! Oh, how mighty is a mother's love ! I have borne without a murmur not to look upon the blue of heaven, the glamour of the flowers, the features of my husband, of my parents, of those who love me ; but it seems that I cannot bear with resignation not to see my child ! Oh, if the black band which covers my sight would fall for a minute, a second only ; if I could look at her as one looks at the vanishing lightning, I should be happy—I should be proud for the remainder of my life !

Edmond this time cannot be my mirror. It is in vain that he tells me that my cherub has fair curly hair, great wayward eyes, and a vermillion smile. What good is that to me ? I cannot see my little darling when she stretches out her arms to me !

LETTER VII

My husband is an angel. Do you know what he is doing ? He has had me cared for during the past year without my knowing it. He wishes to restore the light to me, and the doctor is—himself !—he who for my sake has adopted a profession from which his sensibility recoils.

"Angel of my life," he said to me yesterday, "do you know what I hope?"

"Is it possible?"

"Yes; those lotions which I made you use under the pretext that they would beautify the skin were really preparations for an operation of a very different importance."

"What operation?"

"For the cure of cataract."

"Will not your hand tremble?"

"No; my hand will be sure, for my heart will be devoted."

"Oh!" said I, embracing him, "you are not a man, you are a ministering angel."

"Ah!" he said, "kiss me once more, dearest. Let me enjoy these last few moments of illusion."

"What do you mean, dear?"

"That soon, with the help of God, you will regain your sight."

"And then——?"

"Then you will see me as I am—small, insignificant, and ugly."

At these words it seemed to me as if a flash shot through my darkness: it was my imagination which was kindling like a torch.

"Edmond, dearest," I said, rising, "if you do not trust my love, if you think that, whatever your face may be, I am not your willing slave, leave me in my nothingness, in my eternal night."

He answered nothing, but pressed my hand.

The operation, my mother told me, might be attempted in a month.

I called to mind the details which I had asked about my husband. Mamma had told me that he was marked by small-pox; papa maintains that his hair is very thin: Nicette, our servant, will have it that he is old.

To be marked by the small-pox is to be the victim of an accident. To be bald is a sign of intellectual power: so said Lavater. But to be old—that is a pity. And then, if, unfortunately, in the course of nature, he were to die before me, I should have less time to love him.

In fact, Anaïs, if you remember the stories in the fairy book which we read together, you with eyes and voice, I in heart and spirit, you will admit that I am rather in the interesting situation of "The Beauty and the Beast," without having the resource of the transformation miracle. Meanwhile, pray for me; for, with God's help, who knows whether I shall not soon be able to read your precious letters!

LAST LETTER

Oh, my friend, don't look at the end of this letter before you have read the beginning. Take your share of my griefs, my vicissitudes, and my joys, by following their natural course.

The operation took place a fortnight ago. A trembling hand was placed upon my eyes. I uttered two piercing cries; then I seemed to see day, light, colour, sun. Then instantaneously a bandage was replaced upon my burning forehead. I was cured! only a little patience and a little courage were required. Edmond had restored me to the sweetness of life.

But, must I confess it? I did a foolish thing. I disobeyed my doctor—he will not know it: besides, there is no danger in my rashness now. They had brought me my little one to kiss. Nicette was holding her in her lap. The child said in her soft voice, “Mamma!” I could resist no longer. I tore off the bandage.

“My child! oh, how lovely she is!” I cried out. “I see her! oh, I see her!”

Nicette quickly put the bandage on again. But I was no longer lonely in the darkness. This cherub face, restored by memory, from that moment lighted up my night.

Yesterday my mother came to dress me. We were long over my toilette. I had on a beautiful silk dress, a lace collar, my hair dressed *à la* Marie Stuart. When my arrangements were complete, my mother said to me:

“Take off the bandage.”

I obeyed, and though only a twilight prevailed in the room, I thought that I had never seen anything so beautiful. I pressed to my heart my mother, my father, and my child.

“You have seen,” said my father, “everybody but yourself.”

“And my husband,” I cried out, “where is my husband?”

“He is hiding,” said my mother.

Then I remembered his ugliness, his attire, his thin hair, and his scarred face.

“Poor dear Edmond,” I said, “let him come to me. He is more beautiful than Adonis.”

“While we are waiting for your lord and master,” mamma answered, “admire yourself; look in the glass. You may admire yourself for a long time without blame, if you are to make up for lost time.”

I obeyed ; a little from vanity, a little from curiosity. What if I was ugly ? What if my plainness, like my poverty, had been concealed from me ? They led me to my pier-glass. I uttered a cry of joy. With my slender figure, my complexion like a rose, my eyes a little dazed, and like two shimmering sapphires, I was charming. Nevertheless, I could not look at myself quite at my ease, for the glass was trembling without cessation, and my image reflected on its brilliant surface seemed as if it danced for joy.

I looked behind the glass to see what made it tremble.

A young man came out—a fine young man, with large black eyes and striking figure, whose coat was adorned by the rosette of the Legion of Honour. I blushed to think that I had been so foolish in the presence of a stranger.

“ Just look,” said my mother to me, without taking any notice of him, “ how fair you are ; like a white rose.”

“ Mamma ! ” I cried.

“ Only look at these white arms,” and she pulled my sleeves above the elbow without the smallest scruple.

“ But, mamma,” I said, “ what are you thinking of, before a stranger ! ”

“ A stranger ? it is a mirror.”

“ I don’t mean the glass, but this young gentleman who was behind it, like a lover in a comedy.”

“ Eh ! goose,” cried my father, “ you need not be so bashful. It is your husband.”

“ Edmond ! ” I cried out, and made a step forward to embrace him.

Then I fell back. He was so beautiful ! I was so happy ! Blind, I had loved in confidence. What made my heart beat now was a new love, swollen by the generosity of this truly noble man, who had ordered every one to say that he was ugly, in order to console me for my blindness.

Edmond fell at my knees. Mamma put me in his arms, as she wiped away her tears.

“ How lovely you are,” said my husband to me, in an ecstasy.

“ Flatterer ! ” I answered, looking down at him.

“ No, when I alone was your mirror I always told you so—and see ! my colleague, here, whom you have just consulted, is of the same opinion, and declares that I am right ! ”

CHAMPFLEURY (JULES FLEURY-HUSSON)

1821-1889

THE GREAT FIND OF MONSIEUR BRETONCEL

THE celebrated stockbroker Bretoncel was an amateur of high curiosities. By that is meant curiosities that are not always curious but only high in price, so that the people who collect them think that they are great patrons of art. In their rooms they heap up enamels, Chinese jades, ancient weapons of war, and pieces of Venetian crystal, until their houses look like curiosity shops.

In the autumn Monsieur Bretoncel took a month's holiday on a rich estate by the banks of the Oise, and he did not idle his days away. There, as in Paris, the mania for curiosities worked in him. He roamed the country on foot, and objects that he would not have looked at on a good dealer's recommendation seemed to him wonderful when he lighted upon them after a day of rummaging. A hunter who brings nothing back in his game-bag will kill a hedge-sparrow and have it cooked for breakfast, and find it better than a woodcock. So it is with collectors of curiosities.

One day the stockbroker had thus tramped about the country until he was leg weary. It was five o'clock in the evening, and he was returning sorrowfully to his house with empty hands, when at the door of a tavern he saw a dresser loaded with common plates and dishes. He stopped to see if some precious object was not concealed in the shadow.

"Come in, sir," said the landlady, who, seeing he was tired out, offered him a chair.

Instead of resting, Monsieur Bretoncel roamed around the room, casting an anxious look in each smoky corner, and finally stopped by the mantelpiece, from which hung an old skimmer. He took it down, turned it over and over, and found there was nothing interesting about it except that the holes were ingeniously placed so as to form the name and the date of 1749.

"How much do you want for this skimmer?" he said. The woman at first was not anxious to sell. The thing came from her grandmother

and she did not want to lose it. But as Monsieur Bretoncel so insisted, and offered ten francs, he became the owner of the skimmer, which he studied at his ease sitting by the fireplace and rubbing the copper. Two peasants were also sitting in the tavern before a jug of cider, talking about crops and law-suits.

"What is that man doing?" one of them asked the landlady, who replied that he was a collector of antiquities who had just bought her skimmer for a good sum, that would enable her to get a new one and a pair of hens into the bargain.

"If that is so," said the peasant, raising his voice so as to make himself heard by the fireplace, "I have in my house a famous antiquity!"

Antiquity! The stockbroker at once became interested, and asked the man what he was talking about.

"I don't know what sort of thing you would call it. My children found it in the lumber room, and you may be sure it had been there a long time."

Lumber room! A long time! These were the words that would excite any amateur of curiosities. Monsieur Bretoncel eagerly questioned the peasant.

"All I can tell you, sir, is that it shines. There is a golden angel and some inscription below. It is made of metal."

"Of metal!" cried the stockbroker, opening his eyes wide as though to study this wonderful object of art. "What is the size of it?"

"About as big as the bottom of a saucepan," said the peasant, getting up and slinging over his shoulder his game-bag.

"Are you going already, my dear fellow? Will you take a glass of wine to help you on your way?"

"I have a league to go before I get home, so I will thank you kindly, sir."

The bottle was put on the table.

"You say that there is an angel and some writing?"

"Wait a minute. . . . I remember now, the angel is playing music . . . he is blowing in a trumpet."

"A religious subject," said the stockbroker to himself, "with an explanatory legend. Is it about this size?" he said, taking a saucepan from the fireplace and putting it on the table.

"Just about, sir, except that the upper part is not flat but bulging."

"No doubt hollow underneath?" said the stockbroker.

"My word! You speak like a wizard!"

Monsieur Bretoncel could scarcely conceal his excitement. His breathing was heavy, his heart palpitated, his hands trembled. There was no doubt about it: it was an enamel. The object had been found in a lumber room, where it had been hidden a fine long time, according to the word of the peasant. Thus it was very ancient. It gleamed, it shone. An angel blowing a trumpet was represented, with a golden legend below. The metal was both concave and convex. It was assuredly a marvellous enamel, coming from some old castle or some convent in the neighbourhood. How glorious it would be to recover some admirable masterpiece of Leonard Limousin or Pierre Courtois!

Yet he must not appear excited, lest the countryman should see it. These peasants are so shrewd. He was on the point of making one of the master strokes in the history of collecting; everything pointed that way.

"Would it be possible to see this en——er-er?" said the stockbroker, swallowing the last two syllables of the great word.

"Yes, sir. It costs nothing to look at it. You can even give yourself the satisfaction, any day you please, of seeing my kiddies playing at dinner with it."

"The little wretches!" cried Monsieur Bretoncel. "How can you leave such an object in the hands of mischievous children?"

"Well, the little ones must amuse themselves."

"But haven't they injured the enam——the thing!"

"Oh, no; it is solidly made."

"Are you willing to sell it to me?" said the stockbroker.

"I am willing, sir. It is the kiddies who hold most by it."

"I have a good mind to go with you."

"I only live a league away," said the peasant.

"Madame," said the stockbroker to the landlady, "let us have three small glasses of your best brandy."

As it was necessary to get on good terms with the peasant, Monsieur Bretoncel drank the brandy, not without a grimace, and touched glasses with the man. Then they set out, but ten steps from the door the peasant went back to see if he had left his pipe behind.

"No harm meant, mother," he said to the landlady, "but how much did the swell give you for the skimmer?"

"There's the money!" said the woman, drawing from her pocket the ten-franc piece.

"Good!" said the peasant, and lighting his pipe he came back with a careless air to his fellow-traveller, puffing out great clouds of smoke.

They spoke about the children. The stockbroker wanted to know how many boys and girls there were, and what their ages were; and as at the moment they were passing before the general store of the village, Monsieur Bretoncel begged the man to wait, entered the shop, and came out loaded with dolls, funny men, and bags of sweetmeats.

"How you have loaded yourself up, sir!" said the peasant. "Those toys will grow heavier as we walk along."

"Your little girl interests me," replied the stockbroker, "and it will be quite a delight to me to give your children these toys."

"My word, they will think you are Father Christmas! Our kiddies are not used to such gifts."

For half an hour the conversation thus turned on indifferent matters. The stockbroker tried not to speak about the happy chance that, getting him on the track of a marvellous find, led him along the road, weighed down by all sorts of packets. But from time to time he returned to the subject of his search.

"But aren't you afraid to let your children eat out of the copper object?"

"But I tell you, sir, that the hollow part is glazed like the upper part."

"It is certainly an enamel," said the stockbroker to himself.

In the distance the slate roofs of some farm buildings shone between a row of poplars. The heart of the stockbroker expanded. Just a gun-shot's distance, and the marvel would be gleaming beneath his eyes.

"It is not our village," said the peasant. "We have only reached the village we get our provisions from."

Monsieur Bretoncel sighed. The packets of dolls and sweetmeats began to trouble him, and it was necessary to carry them to the little wretches who had perhaps injured a precious work of art. But it was needful to hide his feelings in order to gain the wonderful thing, and the stockbroker repressed the troubles that he felt. The travellers crossed over the village square, where a great wooden stocking stood out from the front of a draper's shop.

"It was here," said the peasant, "that my wife wanted me to buy her a dress. Unhappily there was a bad market to-day and the

grains fetched a poor price. . . . I shall have to put it off till another time."

The appeal to the generosity of the collector was patent. Still, women are hard in bargaining, and it would be wise to win her favour.

"If your wife would like a dress," said Monsieur Bretoncel, "I shall be delighted to buy her one."

And he entered the big blue stocking shop, and pointed to a roll of dress material.

"Show that enamel," he said.

"Enamel?" repeated the astonished draper.

Dismayed, the stockbroker looked round to see if his companion was listening. But the peasant sat on the doorstep, dreaming of the happy chance that had led him to such a milking cow.

When the material was cut and packed, Monsieur Bretoncel came out with a new packet under his arm.

"Ah, if the fellows of the Stock Exchange saw me in this get-up!" he said.

The copper skimmer hung from the button of his frock coat. The bags of sweets came half out of his pockets. His two hands gripped the dolls and the funny men; and under his left arm the stockbroker carried the dress material.

The peasant offered to take half the parcels. But Monsieur Bretoncel, through a superstition common to collectors, would not agree to it. He could make no movement with his arms; his walk was impeded. But this constraint and worry were not without a charm. The amateur was reminded, at each difficult step, that he was marching to the conquest of a marvel. If his nerves suffered, the enamel gleamed more brightly far ahead.

Monsieur Bretoncel thought of the Duke of Coyon-Latour, whom he had met in the streets of Paris, carrying on his shoulder an enormous bust in marble that he had just acquired. The stockbroker said to himself that he too, while walking in the footsteps of so illustrious a collector, must also share the burden of the passion for curiosities.

"It's a bit of luck my meeting you, sir," said the peasant.

"Have we much farther to go?"

"Just another half-hour."

"But we have been already two hours on the march."

"Well, sir, I warned you we had a good league to go."

"A good league!" cried the frightened stockbroker. For if one

peasant's league equals two real leagues, how many are there in his "good league" ?

" Patience, sir . . . we shall soon be at Quercy. . . . Can't you see the spire ? "

" That spire far away there ? "

" After Quercy, if we make the pace, we can get there in a good quarter of an hour."

At the reference to the good quarter of an hour Monsieur Bretoncel almost fell with all his parcels on the road.

" Happily," said the peasant, " we shall find at the gate of Quercy an inn where they sell a little white wine, dry as gun-flint, that would make a dead man walk."

By a violent effort the stockbroker won to the inn, where he threw on the table dolls, funny men, skimmer, and dress material.

" You are late to-day, Sureau," said the landlady to the peasant. " It will be night before you get home."

" I have been talking with this gentleman," said Sureau.

" Damme ! " said the stockbroker in a burst of anger. " How long will it take us to get to your place ? "

" We should get there in time for supper if we went through Quercy, but I must tell you——"

Sureau scratched his head. " I am obliged to go round by the fields."

" The fields ? "

" No doubt the road is best. But in the middle of the village there is a magistrate's clerk who makes me tremble with anger . . . certainly the road would cut off a good twenty minutes."

" We must follow it," cried the stockbroker, shouldering his parcels. " Let us start."

" But if the magistrate's clerk is before his door I will not answer for myself . . . a misfortune would arise that you would never forget."

" What is the matter ? "

" To tell you the truth, sir, I was behind-hand with a little fine of eighteen francs. Will you believe me that the clerk has already entered me on his book for six francs five sous of extra expense, although I am in the right. A man is a man or he is not . . . if I only saw a picture of the clerk . . . and that's why I always walk another half league every evening to avoid him."

"Another half league!" said Monsieur Bretoncel. "Go and pay him at once, my good fellow. Here are forty francs!"

While the peasant was paying the fine, the stockbroker kept saying to himself, "An enamel!" "An enamel!" "An enamel!" Like a drunkard gorging himself with wine from a cask during the absence of the owner, Monsieur Bretoncel pronounced as often as possible the word that should not have come from his mouth till the conclusion of the bargain.

"I have paid them!" cried the peasant, returning radiant from the house; "but I gave myself the pleasure of telling the man what I thought of him. There is the receipt in discharge. Ah, law costs, they mount up quicker than a monkey can climb!"

Though the peasant showed the receipt, he did not show the change from the forty francs. But the stockbroker said to himself that he now held in his hand the husband and wife and children, so that there could be no getting out of the sale.

Little by little the night fell. Monsieur Bretoncel dragged his legs along, and for the last time he helped himself with the mirage of the enamel. Finally, worn out with hunger and fatigue, he arrived at the farm.

"Ho! wife, where are you? Look at this dress that a gentleman has bought you for a present!"

The tall thin woman scarcely dared to glance at the material, which seemed to her more brilliant than all the tissues of China.

"What! You don't open your mouth. . . . Thank the gentleman and give him a seat. . . . He is rather tired."

"It is not worth the trouble. Let us see this—er—er—the object in question."

"Ah! that's right. . . . Where is it? . . . the kiddies may have carried the bowl into the orchard. Wife, go and look for the antiquity that the children play with. . . . This gentleman has come from the town to see it. . . ."

The woman remained stuck against the wall.

"I gave it to the pigs," she said.

"An enamel for pigs!" cried the stockbroker, losing all his self-control.

"As I could not find a pan for the pigs," said the farmer's wife, "I gave them their potatoes in the bowl."

"But they may have destroyed the enamel with their snouts!" exclaimed Monsieur Bretoncel.

The woman seemed thunderstruck.

"Light the candle, wife, and let us look at the stable," said the peasant.

The door of the stable was opened. The pigs were grunting within. The farmer rained down blows on them to drive them away from their meal.

"Here is the antiquity," he said, after throwing out the bits of potatoes that filled it.

"That!" cried the stockbroker with a look of stupefaction.

The enamel so much desired was only a fire insurance advertisement. Glazed, gilded, with a golden figure of Fame with her trumpet, lettered below, hollowed out behind and convex in front, it was one of those metal plates that French insurance companies nail on the outside of insured houses. Yet it had all the characters from which Monsieur Bretoncel had inferred that it was an enamel, made by the masters of Limoges.

It is in such circumstances that your amateurs of objects of art return home with their ears down, their eyes sorrowful, ashamed, broken with fatigue, and with no illusion to make them forget the length of the road. And it was thus that Monsieur Bretoncel returned, regretting his gifts and his generosities.

MONSIEUR TRINGLE

CHAMPFLEURY

NEVER was there a happier man than Monsieur Tringle the day he received an invitation to Madame Brou's fancy-dress ball.

M. Tringle lost no time in deciding that he would wear a Mephistopheles costume.

M. Tringle was a bachelor, and desiring to become the possessor of Mlle. Brou, or rather of her dowry, determined to put his fate to the touch on the night of the ball. After dressing at the barber's, who lent the costume on hire, and who greatly admired the fine effect, M. Tringle started in all impatience for the scene of action.

"Your cloak, Monsieur Tringle," cried the barber. "It's cold, I warn you."

But the bachelor was already bounding along the streets, rehearsing as he went a *pas de diable* he had just thought out.

He rang the bell.

A slight noise was heard inside, and Mlle. Brou herself opened the door.

"Mademoiselle," said M. Tringle, bending double, so that his tail, starting upwards, was at great pains to be exquisitely polite.

As a rule, Mlle. Brou's face was entirely expressionless, and somewhat resembled a milliner's block looking at the passing of a troop of cavalry from the shop-window. But now she looked immensely astonished.

"Is your mother quite well?" asked M. Tringle, with a further access of affability.

At the same time he entered the hall, and found himself at the dining-room door, where Madame Brou, surrounded by a heap of various stuffs, was sitting at a table lighted by a lamp.

Not without annoyance did M. Tringle say to himself, "I'm too early."

However, he greeted Madame Brou none the less respectfully,

and she, glancing aside under her glasses, looked with tightened lips at the extraordinary being who solicited the favour of paying her his compliments.

Mlle. Brou was sitting by her mother, and the two ladies communicated their impressions in dumb show by such looks of astonishment that at first M. Tringle thought some damage must have occurred to his fine devil's costume during his progress along the streets.

An ominous silence followed the awkward arrival, M. Tringle feeling seriously annoyed with himself for coming so early.

"I beg your pardon," said Madame Brou, making visible efforts to enter into conversation.

"Madame——," but in great confusion M. Tringle said no more. Though his eyes were cast down, he felt Madame Brou looking at him from head to foot, from the hoofs to the wig. Uneasy as a soldier before a severe colonel, he asked, "Am I all right?"

Madame Brou, looking at her daughter as if for advice before opening fire, said, "At the first glance I do not recognise you, Monsieur."

This caused M. Tringle to break into uncontrollable fits of laughter. The effect he desired was obtained!

But the bachelor perceived that Madame Brou did not share his merriment.

The ladies' lips tightened. With a sign of dignity, Madame Brou motioned her daughter to sit up.

They might have been judges about to pronounce sentence.

"What, ladies, don't you recognise me?" asked M. Tringle, proud of his disguise.

"The ladies are late with their costumes," M. Tringle ventured to say.

But as they did not vouchsafe a reply, the bachelor began to feel annoyed, and to think that for these sorts of entertainments the time ought to be printed on the invitation.

"It's very comfortable here, ladies," he ventured to remark.

Internally the bachelor was hoping to taste some of the refreshments of the evening, for the fatigues of the way had made him exceptionally thirsty.

The ladies did not seem to understand him in the least, and M. Tringle was surprised at the unconcern of the lady of the house, who,

at that hour, should surely have been preparing the cakes, lemonade, and punch.

"If only some other mask would arrive!" said M. Tringle to himself; "a new costume would take their attention off me."

But the guests did not hurry themselves.

M. Tringle attempted to put some life into the conversation. "Every one is saying, Madame, that your ball will be the most brilliant of the season."

Once again the scissors stopped, and Madame Brou looked at M. Tringle from top to toe.

"Certainly," thought the bachelor, "some unseemly rent must be visible on my person." Aloud, he observed, "The ladies are, doubtless, putting the finishing touches to their dresses." And he expressed his regret that he was not already able to admire the ladies in the full glory of their costumes.

"What's the use of dressing a week before the ball?" said Mlle. Brou.

"A week before the ball?" cried M. Tringle. "Ye gods!"

"We are not invited to the ball to which you are going, Monsieur," said Madame Brou, lighting a candle, and rising to show the unhappy joker that his visit had already been too long.

"The ball's not to-night?" replied the bachelor in an agitated voice.

"I have the honour to inform you, Monsieur, that we receive on the 18th."

M. Tringle jumped out of his chair.

"The 18th," he cried. "The invitation was dated February 8th. Ah! poor Tringle!"

"What's that?" asked Madame Brou. "You are Monsieur Tringle. What an unfortunate *contretemps*! I was wondering what curious notion could induce a stranger to call on us in that costume."

To dress up like the devil a week before the ball was unheard of. Could he wear so eccentric a disguise twice?

And M. Tringle made countless efforts to hide the tail behind his chair—the tail on whose tricks he had placed all his hopes; but so supple was the spring, that his efforts were not of much avail. At the least movement the ill-behaved little tuft at its end appeared on the arms of the chair, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other.

M. Brou now returned home, and showed Tringle the door—for ever.

So saying, M. Brou opened the door, and shut it with a bang on terrified M. Tringle.

Philosophers of all nations agree that a misfortune never comes single. What were M. Tringle's feelings when, on attempting to descend the staircase, he found something pulling him back !

His tail was shut in the door !—in the door of a house whence M. Tringle had just been finally dismissed.

At about 2 A.M. he managed to free himself, and on his way home his devil's disguise led him into many extraordinary adventures.

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

1821-1880

ST. JULIAN THE HOSPITALLER

I

JULIAN'S father and mother lived in a castle girt with woods on the incline of a hill.

The four angular towers had pointed roofs covered with leaden scales, and the base of the walls rested upon shoulders of rock that shelved abruptly to the bottom of the trenches.

The flagstones in the courtyard were stainless as the floor of a church. Long spouts, in the form of dragons with down-stretched necks, sputtered out the rain-water into the cistern ; on the window-sills of every storey, in painted earthen pots, bloomed basil or heliotrope.

A second enclosure, wooden-staked, embraced a fruit orchard, a garden where the flower-beds took the forms of numerals, a vine arbour with bowers for enjoyment of the air, and a mall which served as a recreation ground for the pages. On the other side stood the kennels, the stables, the bakehouse, the wine-press and the granaries. A pasturage of green turf spread all around, closed in by a stout fence of thorn.

Peace had reigned so long that the portcullis was no more lowered ; the moats were full of water ; swallows made their nests in the loop-holes ; and the archer, who all the day long walked up and down on the curtain-wall, when the sun's rays became too scorching went into the watch-tower and slumbered there like a monk.

Within the castle the iron locks and bolts shone everywhere, tapestries warmed the walls, the cupboards were choked with linen, the cellars were crowded with casks of wine, the oaken money-chests groaned beneath their burden of bags of silver.

In the armoury, between standards and stuffed heads of wild beasts, might be seen a collection of implements of war of all times and all countries, from the slings of the Amalekites and the javelins of the Garamantes, to the short broadswords of the Saracens and the coats of mail of the Normans.

An ox could be roasted entire upon the great spit in the kitchen ;

the chapel was as richly adorned as a king's oratory. There was even in a remote part of the building a Roman bath, but from the use of this the lord of the castle abstained, esteeming it a custom of idolaters.

Enveloped always in a cloak made of fox-skins, he would spend his days roaming through his castle, dealing out justice to his vassals, acting as peacemaker in the strife of neighbours. In winter he watched the falling flakes of snow, or had stories read aloud to him. At the first touch of spring he would ride forth on his mule through the narrow by-ways, alongside the fields of sprouting corn, and talk with and counsel the churls. After many amorous adventures, he had taken to wife a damsel of high lineage.

She was very pale and somewhat proud and serious of mien. The horns of her head-dress touched the lintels of the doors ; the train of her robe dragged three paces behind her. Her household was regulated almost like that of a monastery ; every morning she allotted to her servants their several tasks, supervised the making of preserves and ointments, spun at her distaff, or embroidered altar-cloths. In answer to her prayers God bestowed on her a son.

There were great rejoicings over this, and a banquet was given which lasted three days and four nights ; flowers were strewn upon the floor, harps sounded, there was a continual flare of torches. Rare delicacies were consumed, and fowls as big as sheep ; as a surprise a dwarf was made to step out of a pie ; goblets running short, for the crowd grew continually, they fell to drinking out of horns and helmets.

The young mother took no part in these merry-makings. She kept her bed quietly. One evening, waking up, she saw, in a ray of the moon shining in from the window, what looked like a moving shadow. It was an old man in a russet gown, a rosary at his side, a wallet upon his shoulder, and with all the appearance of a hermit. He drew near to her bed, and said to her without moving his lips apart :

“ Rejoice, O mother ! Thy son will be a saint ! ”

She was about to utter a cry, but gliding away upon the ray of the moon he rose slowly in the air and vanished. The songs in the banqueting-hall surged up louder than ever. Then she heard the voices of angels, and her head fell back upon the pillow, above which was placed the bone of a martyr in a framework of carbuncles.

On the morrow all the servants, when interrogated, declared that they had seen no hermit. Whether a dream or a reality, it must have

been a communication from heaven ; but she was careful to say nothing about it, fearing they would lay it to her vanity.

The guests went off at daybreak, and Julian's father was standing outside the postern-gate, where he had just seen off the last of them, when suddenly a beggar appeared before him in the mist. It was a vagrant with a plaited beard and flashing eyes, wearing silver bangles upon both arms. As though inspired, he gasped out these inconsequent words :

" Ah ! Ah ! Thy son ! . . . Much blood ! . . . Much glory ! . . . Always happy ! The family of an Emperor ! "

And stooping to pick up the alms that had been thrown him, he disappeared in the grass and was no more seen.

The good baron glanced to right and left, and shouted at the top of his voice. No answer ! The wind whistled and the morning mists began to lift.

He attributed this vision to the weariness of his head from lack of sleep. " If I speak of it, they will laugh at me," he said to himself. Nevertheless the splendours promised to his son dazzled him, vague though the promises had been and doubtful though he remained of having heard them.

Husband and wife guarded their secret. But both of them cherished their son with equal tenderness ; and, venerating him as specially favoured by God, they had for his person an infinite regard. His cradle was stuffed with the finest of down ; a lamp in the form of a dove burned above it perpetually ; three nurses rocked him to sleep ; and tucked up carefully in his swaddling-clothes, with his pink face and blue eyes, his brocaded mantle, and his cap adorned with pearls, he looked like a little infant Jesus. His teeth came without his crying once.

When he was seven years old his mother taught him to sing ; and his father, to make him brave, put him on a big horse. The boy smiled gaily, and it was not long before he had learned everything to do with horsemanship.

A very learned old monk taught him the Holy Scriptures, the Arabic numerals, the Roman characters, and gave him lessons in the art of making small pictures upon vellum. They worked together at the very top of a tower, away from all noise.

The task finished, they went down into the garden, and, walking side by side, studied the flowers.

At times a string of beasts of burden, led by a man on foot in Oriental garb, was to be seen passing along the bottom of the valley. The lord of the castle, recognising a merchant, would despatch a messenger to him. The stranger, thus assured, would turn aside from his route, and, entering the hall, display pieces of silk and velvet, goldsmiths' work, perfumes, and other articles of uses unknown ; it would end by his going off unharmed and loaded with his gains. At other times, a body of pilgrims would knock at the gates. Their soaked garments steamed before the hearth ; and when they had eaten and drunk, they would tell of their adventures : of their wanderings upon stormy seas, their marches on foot over burning sands, the ferocity of the pagans, the caverns of Syria, of the Crib of Bethlehem, and the Holy Sepulchre. Then they would take shells out of the pockets of their cloaks and give them to the young master.

Often the lord of the castle would entertain his old comrades-in-arms. As they sat and drank together, they would recall the wars in which they had taken part, their assaults on fortresses, their bombardments with catapults, and their prodigious wounds. Julian, listening to them, would cry out excitedly ; and his father would feel assured that the boy would one day be a conqueror. But in the evening, on coming out from the Angelus, when he passed between the rows of the poor kneeling on either side, Julian would put his hand into his purse so simply and with so noble a dignity, that his mother would begin to picture him as a future archbishop.

His place in chapel was beside his parents ; and however long the services might be, he remained kneeling on his prie-dieu, his cap on the ground and his hands joined.

One day, during Mass, happening to raise his eyes, he noticed a white mouse coming out of a hole in the wall. It scampered over the first altar-step, and after two or three quick turns to left and right, fled back again. On the following Sunday he was troubled by the thought that he might see it again. It returned, and every Sunday he found himself on the look-out for it and distracted by it. He became angered against it and-resolved to rid himself of it.

Having shut the door, and having strewn crumbs of cake along the altar-steps, he lay in front of the hole, a stick in his hand.

At length a pink nose protruded—then the whole mouse emerged bodily. Julian struck down quickly, then remained stupefied before this little body that no longer moved. A drop of blood stained the

floor. He wiped it up quickly with his sleeve, threw the mouse outside, and said nothing about it to anybody.

All sorts of small birds were to be seen pecking the seeds in the garden. It occurred to him one day to put some peas in a reed hollowed out for the purpose. When he heard a twittering in a tree, he drew near it quietly, then raised his tube and blew ; and the little creatures rained down on his shoulders in such numbers that he could not help laughing, mischievously happy.

One morning, when he was returning from the curtain-wall, he saw on the top of the rampart a large pigeon basking in the sun. Julian stood still to look at it ; the wall being broken away at this spot, a bit of stone lay to his hand. He raised his arm and the stone hit the bird, which fell into the moat.

He rushed down, tearing his clothes among the briars, looking for it everywhere as nimbly as a young dog.

The pigeon, its wings broken, hung, palpitating, in the branches of a privet.

The bird's hold upon life irritated the boy. He set about strangling it, and the bird's convulsions made his heart beat, filling it with a savage and tumultuous delight. When at last the victim stiffened in his grasp, a feeling of faintness came over him.

In the evening, during supper, his father declared that a boy of his age should begin to learn the craft of hunting ; and he went in search of an old copy-book which, in the form of questions and answers, contained all the lore of the chase. In this book a master taught his pupil the art of breaking in dogs and training falcons, the setting of snares, and how to distinguish the stag by its scent, the fox by its tracks, the wolf by its scratchings in the earth ; explaining the best way of stalking them all and how to spear them ; telling where their lairs generally might be found, what winds were most propitious for hunting them, enumerating their cries, and giving the rules of the quarry.

As soon as Julian was able to recite all these things by heart, his father started him with a pack of hounds.

First, there were twenty-four Barbary greyhounds, swifter than gazelles, but liable to get out of hand ; then seventeen couples of Breton hounds, red, spotted white, faultless of nose, deep of chest, and great givers of tongue. For boar-hunting, with its risky shifts and doublings, there were forty griffons, as hairy as bears. A number of Tartary mastiffs, standing almost as high as donkeys, flame-coloured,

wide-backed, straight-limbed, were destined for the chase of the aurochs. The black coats of the spaniels shone like satin ; the baying of the talbot-hounds rivalled the note of the beagles. In a yard to themselves, growling, rolling their eyes, and dragging at their chains, were eight allain dogs, formidable brutes, that would spring at the stomach of a man on horseback and were not afraid of lions.

They all ate wheaten bread, drank from stone troughs, and had sonorous names.

The falconry was, perhaps, on a yet grander scale than this ; the lord of the castle at a great outlay had procured tiercelets from Caucasus, sakers from Babylonia, gerfalcons from Germany, as well as peregrine falcons, caught upon cliffs overhanging frozen seas in countries far away. They were all kept together in a large thatched shed ; and ranged in order of size upon the perch, with a patch of grass in front of them, on which from time to time they were set to stretch their legs.

Pouches, hooks, traps of all sorts, were made and kept in readiness.

They would often take out ousels, dogs keen and quick at pointing. Then the beaters, advancing step by step, carefully drew an immense net above their motionless bodies. At a word they started barking ; quail flew up and were quickly captured by the hunting party, including the ladies of the neighbourhood invited with their husbands, children, and attendants.

On other occasions there would be a beating of drums to start the hares ; foxes were taken in the moats ; or a trap laid a wolf by the leg.

But Julian regarded these convenient devices with contempt ; he preferred to go out hunting alone, on horseback, with his falcon. He took almost always a great Scythian tarteret, white as snow. Its leather hood was surmounted by a plume, and golden bells trembled upon its blue feet ; it held fast to its master's wrist while his horse went galloping along and the plains unrolled themselves beneath. Julian, unloosing its tether, would let it fly suddenly. Boldly it darted upwards like an arrow ; and two black marks of unequal size could be seen to twist and turn and come together in the azure distance. The falcon would presently return tearing its prey to pieces, and would resume its place upon Julian's gauntlet, its two wings quivering.

Julian took, in this way, heron, kite, crow, and vulture.

He loved, ever and again blowing his horn, to follow the hounds

coursing down the hillside, leaping rivulets and heading for the woods ; and when the stag began to groan under their teeth, Julian brought it instantly down, and then gloated over the mastiffs devouring the torn and smoking carcase.

On misty days he would betake him to a marsh after duck, teal, and otter.

Three squires would be in waiting for him from daybreak, at the foot of the steps ; and the old monk, leaning out from his narrow window, beckoned in vain to recall him to his studies. He went out now in all weathers, in the heat of the sun, in rain, even in a storm, quenching his thirst with a hand-scoop of river-water, allaying his hunger with wild apples as he rode, resting under an oak when he was tired ; and he would return home in the middle of the night, blood-stained and covered with mud, thorns sticking in his hair, and the scent of wild beasts clinging to his clothes. He grew like to them. When his mother embraced him, he suffered her kisses coldly, seemingly absorbed in profound thought.

He killed bears with the knife, bulls with the axe, and boars with the spear. Once, armed only with a stick, he defended himself against wolves which had been devouring the dead bodies at the foot of a gibbet.

One winter's morning, he set out before daybreak well equipped, a cross-bow on his shoulder, and a quiver full of bolts at his saddle.

His Danish jennet, followed by two basset-hounds, made the earth echo to its even tread. A fierce wind was blowing, and the frost whitened his mantle with pearl-like drops. Presently one side of the horizon was faintly illumined, and in the pale light of dawn he saw rabbits playing here and there near their burrows. The two hounds made for them, and in another moment had broken the backs of several.

Soon he entered a wood. A heathcock benumbed by the cold was sleeping on the end of a branch, with its head under its wing. Julian, with a backward cut of his sword, slashed off the bird's legs, and without troubling to pick it up continued on his way.

Three hours later, he reached the summit of a mountain so lofty that the sky took a black shadow from it. In front of him sank a rock, shaped like a long wall, overhanging a precipice ; at the end of it two wild goats gazed down into the depths. As he had not his bolts with him (for he had left his horse below), he decided to make

his way down to them ; crouching low, bare-footed, he got at last within reach of the nearer of the two and plunged a dagger into its side. The second, terror-stricken, sprang into the void. Julian darted forward to stab it, and his right foot slipping, stumbled over the dead body of its mate, and lay with his arms outstretched, his face downwards over the abyss.

Having descended again into the valley, he followed a line of willows bordering a river. Cranes, flying very low, passed over his head from time to time. Julian brought them down with his whip, missing not one.

By now the air was warmer and the hoar-frost had melted. Clouds of mist floated and the sun came out. He saw a frozen lake gleaming in the distance like a sheet of lead. In the middle of the lake there was a beast that Julian did not know, a black-muzzled beaver. Though it was a long shot, a bolt brought it down, and he was vexed that he could not carry off the skin.

After this he took his way down an avenue of big trees whose topmost branches, meeting, formed a sort of triumphal archway into a forest beyond. A roebuck bounded out of a thicket, a fallow-deer sprang up in a glade, a badger emerged from a hole, a peacock strutting on a grassy patch spread out its tail ; and when he had killed them all, other roebuck, other fallow-deer, other badgers, other peacocks, as well as blackbirds and jays, and polecats, and foxes, and hedgehogs, and lynxes, an infinity of other creatures, made their appearance, their numbers increasing at each step. They circled round him, trembling, their eyes full of gentleness and appeal. But Julian slaughtered them untiringly, alternately fixing his cross-bow, thrusting with his rapier, slashing with his sword, heedless of anything and everything, his mind a blank. He was conscious only of being engaged somewhere in a tremendous hunt, and that this had been so for a period quite indefinite—there he was, and everything seemed to happen with the inexplicable facility of a dream. An extraordinary spectacle now arrested his attention. A valley, shaped like a circus, was filled with stags ; and, crowded close together, they kept each other warm with their breath, which formed into a cloud above them.

The prospect of carnage upon so great a scale during a space of minutes almost suffocated him with lust. Then he dismounted, thrust back his sleeves, and began to shoot.

As the first bolt whistled through the air, all the stags turned their

heads simultaneously. Gaps began to be made in the living mass, plaintive cries went up, and the whole herd began to move convulsively.

The rim of the valley was too steep for them to scale. They bounded hither and thither, trying to escape. Julian continued to take aim and shoot; and the bolts rained down like sleet. The frantic deer reared and pranced and plunged, fighting amongst themselves, mounting on each other's backs; and their bodies with their antlers entangled together made a large mound that fell to pieces as it moved.

At last they all lay dead upon the sand, foam at their nostrils, entrails hanging loose, the heaving of their bodies ceasing gradually. Then all was still.

Night was imminent; and behind the wood, in the interstices of the branches, the sky reddened like a clot of blood.

Julian leant against a tree. He gazed with vacant eyes upon the monstrous massacre, not understanding how he could have wrought it.

On the far side of the valley, on the edge of the forest, he perceived a stag, a doe and a fawn.

The stag, black and of enormous size, carried sixteen points and a white beard. The doe, fair with the pallor of dead leaves, browsed upon the grass, and the spotted fawn sucked at her teats as she moved about.

The cross-bow whirred again. The fawn fell dead. Then its mother, gazing heavenwards, gave out a deep-throated, heart-breaking, human cry of anguish. Julian, angered, stretched her on the earth with an arrow in her chest.

The great stag had seen him and made a bound. Julian let fly at him his last bolt. It struck him on the forehead and remained implanted therein.

The great stag seemed not to feel it, and, stepping over the dead carcasses, it advanced continually, and was about to charge him and tear him open. Julian retreated in indescribable terror. The huge creature stood still, and with eyes flashing, as solemn as a patriarch or a law-giver, whilst a bell sounded in the distance, said thrice over:

"Accursed! Accursed! Accursed! The day will come, ferocious of heart, when thou shalt slay thy father and thy mother!"

Then the stag's knees gave, its eyelids slowly closed, and it fell dead.

Julian was dumb-struck, then overcome with sudden weariness, and his whole being was pervaded with a sense of unutterable sadness and disgust. He wept for a long time, with his forehead clasped between his hands.

His horse was lost ; his dogs had forsaken him ; the solitude enveloping him seemed to threaten him with vague perils. At last, panic-stricken, he set out across the country-side, chose a path at a venture, and found himself almost immediately at the gate of the castle.

That night he did not sleep. In the flickering light of the hanging lamp he saw always the great black stag. Its prediction obsessed him ; he fought against it. " No, no ! " he cried, " I cannot kill them ! " Then he reflected : " Yet, if I were tempted to . . . ? " . . . and he lay in fear lest the Devil should instil in him the desire.

For three months his mother in anguish prayed at his bedside, and his father walked moaning in the corridors. He summoned the most famous physicians, who prescribed quantities of drugs. Julian's malady, they said, sprang from some evil wind or amorous craving. But the youth, for answer to all questions, shook his head.

His strength came back to him, and he was taken out into the courtyard, his father and the old monk supporting him on either side as he walked.

When he was restored completely to health he had resolved to hunt no more.

His father, thinking to please him, presented him with a great Saracen sword.

It was placed in a panoply, on the top of a pillar. A ladder had to be used to reach it. Julian mounted it. The sword was too heavy for him, escaped from his fingers, and in falling grazed the old lord so closely that it cut his cloak. Julian believed he had killed his father, and fainted.

Thenceforth he stood in fear of arms. The sight of a naked sword made him turn pale. This weakness was a great grief to his family.

At last the old monk commanded him in the name of God, of honour, and of his forebears, to resume his manly sports.

His equerries were in the habit of amusing themselves every day throwing the javelin. Julian joined them in this and soon surpassed them all. He would throw his into the neck of a bottle, or break off

the teeth of the weathercocks, or, at a hundred paces, would hit a nail in a door.

One summer's evening, at the hour when the mist makes things indistinct, Julian, being under the trellis in the garden, saw in the distance two white wings fluttering just above the fruit-wall. He made sure it was a stork and threw his javelin.

A piercing scream went forth.

It was his mother. Her hat with its long streamers was pinned to the wall.

Julian fled from the castle and did not return.

II

He joined a body of soldiers who happened to be passing by.

He made acquaintance with hunger and thirst, fevers and vermin. He became inured to the bustle of fighting and the aspect of men stricken to death. The wind tanned his skin. His limbs became toughened by contact with armour ; and as he was of great strength, brave, temperate, and wary, he obtained without difficulty command of a company.

At the outset of a battle he kindled his men with a splendid sweep of his sword. With the help of a knotted rope he climbed up the walls of citadels by night, swung this way and that by the wind, while the sparks of Greek fire fastened on his cuirass, and seething resin and molten lead poured down from the battlements. Time and again his buckler was broken by a stone. Bridges, strained to breaking-point, gave way beneath him. Swinging his mace, he rid himself of fourteen horsemen. He defeated in single combat all those who challenged him. More than twenty times he was thought to be dead.

Thanks to divine favour he escaped always with his life ; for he always protected monks and priests, orphans and widows, and, above all, old men. Whenever he saw an old man walking ahead of him he cried out that he would fain see his face ; it was as though he feared to kill him by mistake.

Fugitive slaves, churls driven to revolt, bastards without means, the daring of all kinds flocked to his banner, and he became the leader of an army.

It grew. He became famous. His support came to be in request.

He went by turn to help the Dauphin and the King of England,

the Knights Templars of Jerusalem and the Surená of the Parthians, the Negus of Abyssinia and the Emperor of Calicut. He fought against the Scandinavians in their coats of fish-plate mail, against negroes carrying shields made of rhinoceros hide and mounted upon tawny asses, against Indians with faces the colour of gold who brandished above their diadems deep-bladed sabres that flashed more brightly than mirrors. He vanquished Troglodytes and Cannibals. He traversed regions so hot that in the sun's rays a man's hair took flame of itself, burning like a torch, and others so cold that the arms, coming loose from the body, would fall upon the ground. He visited lands where fogs were so dense that one walked surrounded by phantoms.

Republics had recourse to him in their difficulties. In negotiations with ambassadors he obtained terms favourable beyond all hopes. When some monarch was acting too evilly he would suddenly appear and call him to book. He gave freedom to subjugated races. He delivered queens imprisoned in castles. It was he, and no other, who slew the monstrous serpent of Milan and the dragon of Oberbirbach.

Now, the Emperor of Occitania, having triumphed over the Spanish Mussulmans, had united himself in concubinage with the sister of the Caliph of Cordova ; by her he had a daughter whom he brought up a Christian. But the Caliph, pretending that he wished to become a convert, came on a visit to him accompanied by a numerous suite, massacred his whole garrison, and threw him into a dungeon keep, where he treated him cruelly in the hope of making him yield up his treasures.

Julian hastened to his aid, destroyed the Infidel army, besieged the town, killed the Caliph, cut off his head, and threw it like a ball over the ramparts. Then he took the Emperor from his prison, and set him on his throne again in the presence of his entire Court.

The Emperor, in reward for so great a service, bestowed upon him large quantities of silver in baskets ; Julian would have none of them. Believing he wanted more, the Emperor offered him three-fourths of his riches ; Julian refused again ; the Emperor then asked him to share his kingdom with him ; Julian thanked him ; and the Emperor began to weep with vexation, not knowing how to express his gratitude, until suddenly he struck his forehead and whispered a word in the ear of a courtier ; a tapestry screen was drawn up and a young girl appeared.

Her great dark eyes gleamed gently like two lamps. A bewitching

smile parted her lips. The coils of her hair were caught in the jewel-work adorning her partly open robe, and her transparent tunic revealed the youthfulness of her limbs. She was very pretty and plump with a slender waist.

Julian was inebriated with desire, the more so in that he had lived until then with extreme chastity.

So he received the Emperor's daughter in marriage, with a castle which she inherited from her mother ; and, the wedding celebrations over, leave-takings ensued, an infinity of courtesies being exchanged.

It was a palace of white marble, built in the Moorish style on a promontory, in a cluster of orange-trees. Terraces of flowers went down to the shore of a gulf, upon which pink shells cracked beneath the feet. At the back of the castle a forest stretched out in the shape of a fan. The sky was perennially blue, and the trees were stirred in turn by breezes from the sea or by winds from the mountains which closed in the horizon far away.

The dusky rooms borrowed their light from the incrustation of the walls. Lofty columns, slender almost as reeds, supported the vaults of the cupolas, decorated with reliefs in the semblance of stalactites.

There were fountains in the halls, mosaics in the courts, festoons hung from the archways, a thousand delicacies of architecture, and everywhere a silence so profound that you could hear the flutter of a scarf or the echo of a sigh.

Julian waged war no more. He rested, surrounded by a people at peace ; and every day a crowd passed before him, bending their knees and kissing their hands after the manner of Orientals.

Robed in purple, he would stand, leaning forward, in the embrasure of a window remembering his hunts of former days ; and he would long to rush over the desert after gazelles and ostriches, to stalk leopards from hiding-places among the bamboos, to traverse forests full of rhinoceroses, to draw bow at eagles from the highest peaks of the most inaccessible mountains, to join battle with polar bears upon the icebergs of the sea.

Sometimes, in a dream, he pictured himself like our father Adam in Paradise, among all the animals. He had but to lift his arm to kill them. Or, perhaps, he would see them defile before him, two by two, in order of size, from the elephants and the lions down to the ermines and wild ducks, as on the day when they entered into Noah's Ark. From the depths of a cavern he hurled javelins at them with unfailing

aim. Then came others. There was no end to them. And he would return to consciousness, rolling his eyes in a frenzy.

Princes whom he counted among his friends invited him to hunt with them. He always refused, hoping by this form of penitence to avert his doom ; for it seemed to him that the fate of his parents was bound up with the slaughtering of animals. But he suffered at never seeing them, and his other yearning began to be intolerable.

His wife, to distract him, sent for jugglers and dancing-girls.

She would accompany him, carried in an open litter, in the country ; at other times, lying on the deck of a sailing-boat, they watched the fish darting this way and that in the pellucid water. Often she would throw flowers at him ; or, crouched at his feet, she played on a three-stringed mandoline. Then placing both her hands together upon his shoulder, she would ask him in a timid voice :

“ What is it that troubles you, dear lord ? ”

And he would make no answer or would break into sobs. At last, one day, he confessed his terrible thought.

She combated it, reasoning out the matter very wisely : his father and mother were in all likelihood dead ; but if ever he should see them again, by what chance, from what motive, could he perpetrate such an enormity ? His fears were groundless, then, and he should resume the chase.

Julian smiled as he listened to her, but could not decide to yield to his craving.

One evening in August, when they were in their sleeping-room, she had just lain down and he was on his knees in prayer, when he heard the cry of a fox, followed by the sound of light footsteps beneath the window ; and in the darkness he seemed to descry the forms of animals. The temptation was too strong. He took down his quiver.

She seemed surprised.

“ I am but obeying you,” he said. “ I shall be back at dawn.”

But she was seized with dread of some disaster.

He reassured her and went out, astonished by her change of mood.

Not long afterwards a page came to her to announce that two unknown visitors, in the absence of the lord, begged to see his lady immediately.

And soon there came into the room an old man and an old woman, garbed in cloth, covered with dust, their backs bent, leaning each one on a stick.

They took courage and declared that they came to Julian with news of his parents.

She leaned forward to listen.

But they, gaining confidence at the sight of her, inquired whether Julian still loved his parents, whether he spoke of them sometimes.

"Yes, indeed," she answered.

Then they cried out :

"We are they." And they sank down, being very weary and tired.

The young wife had no means of telling whether her husband was in truth their son.

They gave her proofs, describing particular marks that he had upon his skin.

She jumped up from her bed, called to her page, and food was set before them.

Although they were very hungry they could scarcely eat ; and she, seated apart, noticed how their bony fingers trembled when they raised the goblets.

They asked a thousand questions about Julian. She replied to each, taking care, however, to say nothing of the sinister idea that concerned them.

Seeing no signs of his return, they had left their castle and had been journeying for many years, led by vague traces of him, never losing hope. So much money had gone upon river-tolls and in inns, so much in taxes to princes or in compliance with the demands of robbers, that their purse was empty and they were now begging. What mattered it now that so soon they were to embrace their son ? They acclaimed his good fortune in having so sweet a wife, and they never tired of gazing on her and of kissing her.

The richness of the apartments set them marvelling ; and the old man, scanning the walls, inquired why they were emblazoned with the arms of the Emperor of Occitania.

She replied :

"He is my father."

At this he began to tremble, recalling the prediction of the vagrant ; and the old woman thought of the words of the hermit. This greatness of her son was doubtless but the dawn of eternal splendours. They both sat open-mouthed beneath the light of the candelabra that illuminated the table.

They must have been very beautiful in their youth. The mother had still her full wealth of hair, and its delicate ringlets, as if modelled in snow, hung down beside her cheeks ; and the father, with his tall figure and flowing beard, looked like a statue in a church.

Julian's wife begged them not to sit up until his return. She put them into her own bed and then closed the window ; they fell asleep. Day was breaking ; outside the windows the little birds were beginning to sing.

Julian had crossed the park ; and he made his way through the forest with vigorous step, enjoying the springy soil and the mild air.

The shadows of the trees stretched out over the heath. Sometimes the moon made white splashes of light in the clearings, and he hesitated to advance thinking he had come upon a pond ; sometimes the surface of still pools was indistinguishable from the colour of the grass. There was everywhere a great silence ; and he could see not one of the animals which, a few minutes earlier, had been wandering round his castle.

The wood thickened, the darkness grew profound. Whiffs of warm air came and went, laden with enervating perfumes. He found his feet sinking into masses of dead leaves, and he leant against an oak to breathe a little.

Suddenly, behind his back, a darker shadow leapt by, a wild boar. Julian had not time to grasp his bow, and grieved over this as a misfortune.

Then, having emerged from the wood, he perceived a wolf making quickly along a hedgerow.

Julian let fly a bolt. The wolf stopped, turned its head round to look at him, and went on its way. It trotted on, keeping always the same distance, stopping now and again, and renewing its flight as soon as Julian had taken aim.

Julian traversed in this way an interminable expanse of ground, then came upon some small sandhills, and finally found himself on a plateau commanding a great space of country. Flat stones lay scattered among ruined vaults. He stumbled over dead men's bones ; here and there worm-eaten crosses slanted miserably. But forms seemed to be moving in the indistinct shadows of the tombs ; and hyenas issued forth, frightened, panting. Clattering their hoofs on the stones, they came up to him, exposing their gums as they sniffed

at him. He drew his sword. They scattered in every direction, and, scampering off on their uneven, headlong way, disappeared far away in a cloud of dust.

An hour later, he encountered in a ravine an angry bull, horns down, scraping the sand with its hoof. Julian struck it under the dewlap with his lance. It broke into pieces as though the animal were made of bronze. He closed his eyes, and waited for his death. When he opened them again, the bull had disappeared.

Then his soul sank with shame. Some stronger power annulled his strength ; turning homewards he re-entered the forest.

His path was impeded by climbing plants ; he was cutting through them with his sword when a polecat slipped swiftly between his legs, a panther bounded over his shoulder, and a serpent circled up an ash-tree.

From out of the leaves of the ash a hideous jackdaw watched Julian ; and here and there among the branches appeared innumerable sparkling lights, as though the firmament had rained down all its stars into the forest.

These were the eyes of animals—wild cats, squirrels, owls, parrots, and apes.

Julian let fly at them with his bolts ; the bolts, with their feathers, rested on the leaves like white butterflies.

He threw stones, but the stones hit nothing and fell back upon the ground. He cursed himself, would have liked to strike himself, yelled imprecations, and choked with rage.

And all the animals he had hunted appeared and formed a narrow circle round him. Some of them were standing, others sitting on their haunches. He stood in their midst, frozen with terror, incapable of the slightest movement. At last, by a supreme effort of his will, he took a step forward ; those who were perched in the trees opened their wings, those who crowded the earth stirred their limbs ; and all went with him.

The hyenas went in front of him, the wolf and the boar behind. The bull, on his right, tossed its head ; on his left, the serpent wound its way through the grass ; while the panther, arching its back, advanced with long strides and velvet steps. He moved forward as slowly as possible, so as not to anger them ; and he saw emerging from the depths of the underwood porcupines, foxes, vipers, jackals, and bears.

Julian began to run; they ran with him. The serpent hissed; the animals stank and slobbered. The boar scratched his heels with its tusks; the wolf the palms of his hands with the bristles of its muzzle. The apes pinched him, making faces at him; the polecat tumbled about beneath his feet. A bear, with a sweep of its paw, knocked off his hat; and the panther contemptuously let fall a dart which it had been carrying in its throat.

There was irony in their sinister aspect. And while they watched him out of the corners of their eyes, they seemed to be meditating a plan of vengeance. He, stupefied by the buzz of the insects, battered by the wings of birds, suffocated by the breath of the beasts, moved forward with his arms outstretched and his eyelids closed, like a blind man, without even the strength to cry out for pity!

The crowing of a cock trembled in the air. Others answered; it was daybreak; and Julian descried the turrets of his castle above the orange-groves.

Then, at the side of a field, he saw, at a distance of three paces, three red-legged partridges flying about in the stubble. He swung off his cloak and threw it over them like a net.

Lifting it again, he found but one bird beneath it, and it had been long dead and was putrid.

This disappointment exasperated him more than all the others. His craving for carnage taking hold of him anew, and animals failing him, he would fain have slaughtered men.

He went up the three terraces, and broke open the gate with a blow of his fist; but, at the bottom of the staircase, the memory of his dear wife softened his heart. Doubtless she still slept and he would surprise her.

Having removed his sandals, he gently turned the bolt of the door and entered.

The windows, lined with lead, dimmed the pale light of the dawn. Julian caught his feet in clothes lying on the floor; a little further, he stumbled against a sideboard, still covered with plates and dishes. "No doubt she has had something to eat," he said, and he advanced towards the bed, that was hidden in the darkness at the other end of the room. When he was beside it, wishing to kiss his wife, he leaned over the pillow upon which the two heads rested side by side. And he felt upon his lips the touch of a beard.

He started back, thinking he had gone mad; but he drew close

to the bed again, and his fingers, groping, came upon tresses of hair that were very long. To convince himself that he had made a mistake, he moved his hand slowly back over the pillow. This time there could be no doubt—it was a beard and a man ! A man in bed with his wife !

Bursting with unbridled rage, he flung himself upon them with his poniard, stamping his feet, foaming at the mouth, uttering cries like a wild beast. Then he stopped. His victims, stabbed to the heart, had not even moved. He listened attentively to their breathing, and as it gradually failed, the sound of another's breathing came to him from afar. Vague at first, this drawn-out, plaintive sound drew nearer and nearer, and, increasing in volume, became painful : and, terrified, he recognised the throating of the great black stag.

And, as he turned, he thought he saw in the framework of the door the phantom of his wife, a light in her hand.

The noise of the murder had brought her to the room. A glance told her all, and fleeing in horror she let the torch fall.

He picked it up.

His father and mother were before him, lying upon their backs, with gaping wounds in their breasts ; and their countenances, filled with a gentle majesty, seemed to be guarding a secret for all time. Spots and splashes of blood bespattered their white skin, the bed-clothes, the ground, the ivory crucifix hanging in the alcove. The window, aglow now through the red dawn, intensified these crimson stains, and flung many others about the room. Julian walked towards the dead bodies, declaring to himself, striving to convince himself that it was not possible, that he was mistaken, that there were sometimes resemblances beyond understanding. At last, bending down to scan the old man's visage, he saw between the eyelids, not yet quite closed, lifeless eyes that burned like fire. Then he went round to the other side of the bed, where lay the second body, the white hair covering part of the face. Julian, placing his hand under the tresses, raised the head ; and he stood looking at it, holding it stiffly at arm's length, while with the other hand he lit up the features with the torch. Drops of blood dripping from the mattress fell one by one upon the floor.

At close of day Julian approached his wife ; and, in a voice unlike his own, he commanded her in the first place to make no answer to him, not to draw near him, not even to look at him ; under pain of damnation she was to carry out all his orders, which were irrevocable.

The funeral obsequies were to be arranged in accordance with instructions which he had left in writing, on a prie-dieu, in the death-chamber. He was leaving her the palace, with his vassals and all his goods, without even retaining the clothes he was wearing, or his sandals, which would be found at the top of the staircase.

She had fulfilled the will of God in bringing about the occasion of his crime ; she must pray for his soul, since henceforth he would cease to be.

The dead were interred with magnificence in the church of a monastery distant three days' journey from the castle. A monk with lowered cowl followed the procession, far from all the others, without any one daring to speak to him.

He remained throughout the Mass prostrated at the entrance to the church, his arms stretched wide, his forehead in the dust.

After the burial, he was seen to take the road which led to the mountains. He looked back several times, and at last disappeared.

III

He went off, begging his way throughout the world.

He held out his hand for alms to riders on the highroads, bent his knee to men gathering in the harvests, or stood motionless before the gates of farmyards ; and his face was so sad that no one ever refused him.

In his spirit of humility, he recounted his history ; then all fled from him, making the sign of the cross. In villages through which he had passed previously, doors were closed against him as soon as he was recognised, and people threatened him and threw stones at him. The more charitable placed dishes outside their windows, then closed the shutters so as not to see him.

Repulsed by every one, he avoided mankind ; he lived on roots, plants, odds and ends of fruit, and shellfish picked up along the beaches.

Sometimes, as he passed along the side of a hill, he saw down below a confused mass of roofs, with stone steeples, and towers, and bridges, and dark streets interlacing, whence a continual buzzing mounted to his ears.

The need he felt to mingle in the lives of others caused him to

descend into the city. But the brutality of the faces he saw, the din of the crafts, the carelessness of their talk froze his heart. On days of festival, when the bells of the cathedrals set everybody rejoicing from break of day, he would watch the inhabitants issue forth from their houses, and stand looking on at the dances in the market-places and at the fountains of beer at the cross-roads ; in the evening, he saw through the ground-floor windows the long family tables at which the grandparents sat, with small children on their knees ; sobs choked him, and he went back into the country.

He observed with a rush of affection the colts grazing in the meadows, the birds in their nests, the insects upon the flowers ; all, at his approach, ran off, hid themselves in terror, or flew swiftly away.

He sought solitudes. But the wind brought him sounds like those of a death-agony ; the falling of drops of dew recalled to him the falling of other drops and heavier. The sun at evening touched the clouds with blood ; and every night in his dreams he went through his parricide again.

He made himself a penitential shirt with small iron spikes in it. He climbed on his knees all hills that had chapels on their summits. But the remorseless memory darkened the splendour of the tabernacles ; no penance could distract him from its tortures.

He did not turn against God, who had destined him to this act, and yet he was in despair at having been capable of committing it.

His own physical being filled him with so much horror that in the hope of ridding himself of it he ventured it in peril. He saved cripples from burning houses, children from the depths of chasms. The abyss gave him back, the flames spared him.

Time brought no relief to his sufferings. They grew unbearable. He resolved to die.

And one day, having come upon a well, and having leant over it to judge the depth of the water, he saw appear before him an emaciated old man, with a white beard, and an aspect so sad that at the sight of him he could not restrain his tears. The old man wept also. Not recognising his own image, Julian recalled vaguely a similar countenance. He uttered a cry : it was his father's. And he put away the thought of killing himself.

In this way, bearing the burden of his memories, he traversed many lands ; and he came at last to a river which was dangerous to cross by reason of its violence and of the great extent of slimy mud

upon its banks. For a long time past no one had dared to make the crossing.

An old boat, its stern sunk in the mud, lifted its prow among the reeds. Julian, examining it, found a pair of oars, and the idea came to him that he might devote his life to the service of others.

He began by making a sort of causeway down the bank, enabling people to reach the river ; and he broke his finger-nails in his efforts to shift the huge stones which he carried, holding them against his stomach. Often he lost his footing and slipped into the slime, and narrowly escaped with his life.

Then he repaired the boat with bits of wreckage, and he constructed himself a cabin out of clay and the trunks of trees.

The ferry becoming known, passengers began to appear. From the opposite bank they would hail him by waving flags, and Julian would quickly jump into his boat. It was very heavy ; and it would be weighed down with all kinds of goods and chattels, without counting the beasts of burden, that, restive from fear, encumbered him still more. He asked for no recompense for his labours ; some would give him what was left of the victuals they carried in their wallet, or worn-out garments for which they had no further use. When men of brutal habits broke out in blasphemy, Julian reproved them gently, and they answered him with insults. He contented himself with blessing them.

A small table, a bench, a couch of dead leaves, and three cups made of clay, that was all his furniture. Two holes in the wall served as windows. On one side stretched out barren plains flecked here and there with pools of colourless water ; and the great river in front rolled its greenish flood. In the spring the damp earth gave out a putrid odour. Then a violent wind raised whirlwinds of dust. The dust permeated everything ; it turned the water he drank into mud, and gritted his gums. A little later there were clouds of mosquitoes, from whose buzzing and stings there was no respite day or night. And then followed terrible frost, which turned things to the hardness of stone and inspired a mad longing to eat meat.

Months passed without Julian's seeing any one. Often he closed his eyes, endeavouring in memory to return to the days of his youth ; and the courtyard of the castle came back to him, with the grey-hounds upon the steps, attendants in the *salle d'armes*, and, in an arbour of vine-branches, a fair-haired youth seated between an old man

covered with furs and a lady wearing a high head-dress ; then, in a moment, the two dead bodies were before his eyes. He threw himself face downwards upon his bed, and cried out over and over again, weeping :

“ Oh ! Poor father ! Poor mother ! Poor mother ! ”

And he fell into a troubled sleep in which the dread visions still haunted him.

One night, as he slept, he thought he heard some one calling him. He lent ear, and could distinguish nothing but the roaring of the waters.

But the voice came back :

‘ Julian ! ’

It came from the other bank, and this seemed to him extraordinary by reason of the breadth of the river.

A third time it called :

“ Julian ! ”

And this penetrating voice had the tone of a church bell.

Having lit his lantern, he went out of his cabin. A furious gale filled the night. The darkness was profound. Here and there were faint flashes of white waves.

After a minute's hesitation, Julian pushed off. The water became calm immediately, the boat glided across and touched the opposite bank, upon which a man stood waiting.

He was enveloped in ragged garments, his face looked like a death-mask, and his two eyes were redder than live coals. Holding the lantern up to him, Julian perceived that he was covered with a hideous leprosy ; nevertheless there was in his bearing something of the majesty of a king.

When he set foot on the boat, it sank deep down beneath his weight, but it righted with a shock and Julian began to row.

At every stroke of the oars the boat rose upon the waves. The water, blacker than ink, swept fiercely past the gunwale, now sinking into gulfs, now rising into mountains ; and the boat leapt over them and sank again into the depths, blown this way and that by the wind.

Julian leant forward, stretched out his arms, and, making sure of his foothold, twisted himself round so as to acquire more power over the boat. The hail stung his hands, the rain poured down his back, the force of the wind made him breathless, and he ceased rowing. Then

the boat drifted down-stream. But, feeling that a great matter was at stake, a command which he must not disobey, he seized the oars again ; and their click-clack against the thole-pin cut into the clamouring of the wind.

The little lantern burnt in front of him. Birds flying past obscured it momentarily. But always he saw the eyes of the leper who stood upright at the stern, motionless as a column.

And this lasted a long time, a very long time.

When at last they reached the cabin, Julian closed the door ; he saw the leper sitting on the bench. The shroud-like garments which he wore had fallen to his hips ; and his shoulders, his breast, his meagre arms, were covered with scaly sores. Enormous wrinkles furrowed his brow. Like a skeleton, he had a hole in place of a nose ; and his bluish lips emitted a dense, mist-like, sickening breath.

" I hunger ! " he said.

Julian gave him what he had, an old piece of bacon and some crusts of black bread.

When he had devoured them, the table, the porringer, and the handle of the knife bore the same stains that marked his body.

Then he said, " I thirst ! "

Julian went in search of his jug ; and as he lifted it, there came from it an aroma that distended his heart and his nostrils. It was wine ! What a discovery ! But the leper reached for it and at one draught emptied the jug.

Then he said, " I am cold ! "

Julian, with his candle, lit a bundle of brushwood in the middle of the cabin.

The leper approached it to warm himself ; and, crouching upon his heels, he began to tremble in all his limbs, and to lose strength ; his eyes glowed no longer, his ulcers ran, and, in a voice almost dying, he murmured :

" Thy bed ! "

Julian gently helped him to drag himself to it, and even drew over him his boat-cloth as a covering.

The leper groaned. His teeth showed at the corners of his mouth, his breast shook with a thick rattle, and his stomach at every breath he drew became hollow to the spine.

Then he closed his eyes.

" I feel as though I had ice in my veins ! Come near me ! "

And Julian, raising the cloth, lay down upon the dead leaves, close to him, side by side.

The leper turned his head.

‘ Undress, so that I may have the warmth of thy body ! ’

Julian took off his clothes ; then, naked as on the day of his birth, lay down again upon the bed ; and he felt against his thigh the skin of the leper, colder than a snake’s and as rough as a file.

He tried to encourage him ; and the leper replied, panting :

“ Ah, I am going to die ! . . . Come nearer me, warm me ! Not with thy hands—no, with thy whole body ! ”

Julian spread himself all over him, mouth against mouth, breast on breast.

Then the leper strained Julian to him, and his eyes suddenly took on the radiance of stars ; his hair spread out like rays of sunlight ; the breath from his nostrils had the sweetness of roses ; a cloud of incense rose from the hearth-stone, and the waters sang outside. And a flood of ecstasies, a joy superhuman, swept through the fainting soul of Julian ; and he whose arms still enfolded him became greater and ever greater, touching with his head and his feet the two walls of the cabin. The roof flew off, the firmament opened out ; and Julian ascended towards the blue depths beyond, face to face with Our Lord Jesus who carried him to Heaven.

And that, as nearly as may be, is the story of St. Julian the Hospitaller, as it is to be found on a church window in my country.

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE
1821-1867

AN HEROIC DEATH

FANCIULLO was an admirable buffoon, and almost one of the friends of the Prince. But for persons vowed by their positions to the comic side of life, serious things have a fatal attraction ; and though it may appear odd that ideas of liberty and the fatherland should despotically take possession of the brain of an actor, one day Fanciullo joined in a plot formed by several discontented gentlemen.

Everywhere there exists some good man to denounce to the government those individuals of atrabilious humour who wish to depose princes and carry out a change of society without consulting the people. The lords in question were arrested, together with Fanciullo, and condemned to certain death.

I would willingly believe that the Prince was almost sorry to find his favourite comedian among the rebels. The Prince was neither better nor worse than other rulers ; but an excessive delicacy of feeling rendered him in many cases more cruel and more tyrannical than other men in similar positions. A passionate lover of the fine arts, excellent connoisseur besides, he was truly insatiable of pleasure. Fairly indifferent in regard to men and morality, veritable artist himself, he knew no peril except that of boredom. The strange efforts he made to fly or conquer this tyrant of the world would certainly have drawn on him from a severe historian the epitaph of " monster " if it had been permitted in his domains to write anything that did not tend solely to give pleasure or astonishment, which is one of the most delicate forms of pleasure. The great misfortune of the Prince was that he never had a theatre vast enough for his genius. There are young Neros who stifle in too narrow limits and of whose names and good intentions future ages will be ignorant. Unforeseen Providence had given to this man faculties greater than his territories.

Of a sudden the rumour ran that the Prince intended to pardon all the plotters. And the origin of this rumour was the announcement of a grand spectacle, in which Fanciullo would play one of his chief and

best parts, with, it was said, the assistance of the condemned gentlemen—an evident sign, added the shallow minds, of the generous intentions of the offended Prince.

On the part of a man so naturally and willingly eccentric, everything was possible—even virtue, even clemency—above all, if he could possibly hope to find in it some unexpected pleasure. But to those who, like myself, had been able to penetrate further into the depths of this sick and curious soul, it was infinitely more probable that the Prince wished to judge the genius for acting in a man condemned to death. He wished to profit by the occasion to make a physiological experiment of capital interest, and verify up to what point the habitual habits of an artist could be changed or modified by the extraordinary situation in which he found himself. Beyond that, did there exist in the soul of the Prince a more or less settled intention to clemency? This is a point that no one has ever been able to clear up.

At last the great day arrived. The little court displayed its full pomp, and it would be hard to conceive, without at least having seen it, all that the privileged class of a little state with restrained resources can show in splendours on an occasion of true solemnity. This was a doubly true solemnity, first from the enchantment of luxury displayed there, and then from the moral and mysterious interest attaching to the affair.

Master Fanciullo excelled especially in dumb rôles, or those lightly charged with words. These parts are often the most important in those pantomime dramas that aim at representing by symbols the mystery of life. He entered the stage lightly and with perfect ease, and this contributed to strengthen in the noble public the idea of gentleness and pardon.

When it is said of a comedian, "There is a good comedian," the saying implies that the man can still be glimpsed beneath the character he plays. That is to say, art, effort, and will power can be guessed at. Now, if an actor succeeded in being, relative to the character he had to express, what the finest statues of antiquity would be—miraculously animated, living, moving, seeing—relative to the general and confused idea of beauty, that would be, without a doubt, a singular and quite unlooked-for event. Fanciullo was that evening a perfect idealisation, which it was impossible not to suppose—living, possible, real. The buffoon came and went, laughed, cried, convulsed himself, with an indestructible halo round his head, a halo invisible to all else but me,

in which were mingled in a strange amalgam the beams of art and the glory of martyrdom.

By I know not what special grace, Fanciullo introduced the divine and supernatural into the most extravagant buffooneries. My pen trembles, and tears, born of an emotion always present, rise to my eyes while I seek to describe to you that unforgettable evening. Fanciullo proved to me in a peremptory, irrefutable manner that the intoxication of art is more apt than all other to veil the terrors of the abyss ; that genius can play in comedy at the brink of the grave with a joy that prevents it from seeing the grave, lost, as it is, in a paradise excluding all idea of death and destruction.

All the audience, surfeited and frivolous as it may have been, soon submitted to the almighty power of the artist. No one thought any more of death, of mourning, or of suffering. Each abandoned himself without disquietude to the multiplied delights given by a masterpiece of living art. Explosions of joy and admiration shook again and again the vaults of the building with the energy of continued thunder. The Prince himself, drunk with pleasure, mingled his applause with that of his court. Still, to a clear-seeing eye, his intoxication was not pure of all admixture. Did he feel himself overcome in his power as a despot ; humiliated in his power of terrifying hearts and benumbing minds ; frustrated in his hopes and baffled in his provisions ? Such suppositions, not exactly justified, but not absolutely unjustifiable, crossed my mind, while I contemplated the countenance of the Prince, on which a new pallor was continually added to his habitual pallor, as snow is added to snow. His lips tightened more and more, and his eyes lightened up with an inner fire resembling that of jealousy or spite, even while he was ostensibly applauding the talents of his old friend, the strange jester, who jested so well with death. At a certain moment I saw His Highness lean towards a little page, placed behind him, and speak in his ear. The mischievous face of the pretty child lighted up with a smile, and then he alertly left the royal box as though to carry out some urgent commission.

Several minutes later, the sound of a shrill, prolonged hiss interrupted Fanciullo in one of his best moments, and rent both ears and hearts. And from the place in the hall where this unexpected disapprobation had burst forth, a child ran into a corridor with muffled laughter.

Fanciullo, shaken, roused from his dream, at first shut his eyes,

then opened them almost at once, immeasurably enlarged, then opened his mouth in a convulsive breath, staggered a little in front and a little behind, and then fell stone-dead on the planks.

Had the hiss, swift as a sword, really frustrated the headsman? Had the Prince himself divined all the murderous efficacy of his trick? It is permitted to doubt it. Did he regret his dear and inimitable Fanciullo? It is sweet and legitimate to believe it.

The guilty lords had played for the last time in the comic spectacle. On the same night they were effaced from life. Since then, several mimes, justly esteemed in different countries, have come to play before the court, but none of them has been able to remind us of the wonderful talents of Fanciullo, nor rise to the same favour.

THE CORD

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

ILLUSIONS, said my friend to me, are perhaps as innumerable as the relations of men with men, or of men with things. And when an illusion disappears, that is to say, when we see the man or the thing as it exists outside us, we feel an odd emotion, made up half of regret for the vanished phantom, half of delightful surprise over the novelty of the real fact. For instance, if there exists an evident, commonplace, unchanging phenomenon with a character that it is impossible to deceive oneself about, it is maternal love. It is as difficult to think of a mother without maternal love as of light without heat. Is it not then perfectly legitimate to attribute to maternal affection all the actions and words of a mother in connection with her child? Yet listen to this little story, in which I have been strangely mystified by the most natural of illusions.

My work as a painter leads me to study attentively the faces, the physiognomies, that strike me when I am out walking. You know what delight we get from this faculty which to our eyes makes life more living and more significant than for other men. In the remote part of the town where I live, with large grassy spaces still separating the buildings, I often observed a boy who pleased me from the first by his ardent and mischievous features that distinguished him from all his playfellows. More than once he used to pose for me, and I have transformed him now into a little gipsy, now into an angel, now into mythological Love. I have made him bear the violin of the vagrant, the crown of thorns and nails of the Passion, and the lighted torch of Eros.

At last I took so lively a pleasure in all the drolleries of this urchin that one day I begged his parents—very poor people—to let me look after him. I promised I would feed and clothe him and give him a little money, and not overwork him while cleaning my brushes and running errands for me. The lad, when his face was washed, became charming, and the life he led in my studio seemed to him heavenly in comparison with that which he had known in his dirty hovel of a

home. Only I must tell you that this little chap sometimes astonished me by strange moods of precocious melancholy, and that he soon showed an excessive taste for sugar and liqueurs. One day I found that, in spite of my numerous warnings, he had again committed a fresh larceny of this kind, and I threatened to send him back to his parents. Then I went out on some business that took me a pretty long time, and it was late before I got back.

And oh, my horror and astonishment when I entered my house ! The first object that struck my eyes was my little chum, the roguish companion of my life, hanging from the panel of the wardrobe. His feet almost touched the ground ; a chair, that he no doubt had kicked over, was upset by his side. His head leaned convulsively on his shoulder, his swollen face and his eyes, quite wide open with a terrifying fixity, gave me at first an illusion that he was alive. Getting him down was not as easy a task as you would think. He was already very stiff, and I had an explicable repugnance to let him abruptly tumble on the ground. It was necessary to support him with one arm, and cut the cord with the other hand. But when that was done the work was not finished. The little wretch had used a very thin thread that had bitten deeply into his flesh, and it was necessary to search for the cord, with fine scissors, between the two ridges of swollen flesh, in order to free his neck.

I neglected to tell you that I had quickly shouted for help. All my neighbours, however, refused to come to my aid, faithful in that to the habits of civilised man, who will never, I don't know why, have anything to do with a hanging affair. At last the doctor came, and he declared that the child had been dead for some hours. When later we had to undress him for burial, the rigidity of the corpse was such that, despairing of bending the limbs, we had to cut and tear the clothes to get them off.

The police officer, to whom, naturally, I had to report the accident, looked at me sideways, and said, " This is very suspicious ! " moved no doubt by an inveterate desire and a habit of mind of making everybody afraid, at all costs, whether innocent or guilty.

There remained a supreme task to accomplish, the mere thought of which gave me terrible pain. It was necessary to inform the parents. My feet refused to take me to them. At last I plucked up courage. But, to my great astonishment, the mother was impassible. Not a tear oozed from the corner of her eye. I attributed this strange thing

to the horror she must feel, and I remembered the well-known saying : " The most terrible sorrow is a silent sorrow." As for the father, he contented himself with saying, half brutally, half dreamily, " After all, it is perhaps just as well ; he would always have finished badly ! "

However, the body was stretched on my sofa, and, helped by a serving-maid, I was carrying out the last duties to the dead, when the mother entered my studio. She wished, she said, to see the corpse of her son. I could not in truth prevent her from intoxicating herself with her grief, and refuse her this supreme and sombre consolation. Then she begged me to show her the spot where her little one had hanged himself.

" Oh no, Madame," I answered her, " that would upset you ! "

And as my eyes unconsciously turned towards the deadly wardrobe, I perceived, with a mixture of disgust and anger, that the nail remained in the wood, with a long length of cord still trailing from it. I sprang up quickly to get rid of these last traces of the misfortune, and as I was about to fling them away through the open window, the poor woman seized my arm and said in an irresistible voice :

" Oh, sir ! Let me have that ! I beg you ! I implore you, sir ! "

It seemed to me that her despair had reached such a point of infatuation that she was now seized with a kind of tenderness for that which had been the instrument of her son's death, and wished to keep it as a dear, horrible relic.

She went away with the nail and the cord ; and at last ! at last ! all was over. I had nothing more to do than to set again to work, harder than usual, to drive away little by little the young corpse that haunted the folds of my brain, and whose phantom, with its large fixed eyes, wore me out. But the next day I received a packet of letters. Some were from the tenants in my house ; others from neighbouring houses ; one from the first floor ; another from the second ; another from the third, and so on. Some in a half-joking style, seeking to disguise under an apparent jest the sincerity of the demand ; others heavily impudent, and full of bad spelling ; but all tending to the same end, that is to say, to obtain from me a piece of the fatal and blessed cord. Among the writers there were, I daresay, more women than men, but they did not all, believe me, belong to the vulgar and lowest class. I have kept those letters.

And then, suddenly, my mind lighted up, and I understood why the mother was so bent on snatching the cord away from me, and by what kind of trade she intended to console herself.

HENRI MÜRGER

1822-1881

FRANCINE'S MUFF

AMONG the true Bohemians of the true Bohemia, I once knew one named Jacques D——; he was a sculptor, and gave promise of showing talent some day. But misery did not give him time to fulfil these promises; he died of exhaustion in the month of March 1844, in the Hospital St. Louis, Ward St. Victoire, bed No. 14.

I knew Jacques in the hospital, where I was myself detained by a prolonged illness. Mademoiselle Francine had been Jacques' sole and only sweetheart; he did not, however, die old, for he was scarcely twenty-three years of age. This love-story was told to me by Jacques himself, when he was No. 14 and I No. 16 of the Ward St. Victoire—an ugly spot in which to die.

Jacques and Francine had met in a house in the Rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, where they had both taken lodgings in the same April quarter. The artist and the young girl were a whole week before they entered into those neighbourly relations into which dwellers on the same floor are almost always forced; yet, without having ever exchanged a word, they already knew one another. Francine knew that her neighbour was a poor devil of an artist, and Jacques had heard that his neighbour was a little dressmaker, who had left her family to escape the unkind treatment of her stepmother. She performed miracles of economy to make both ends meet, as it is called; and as she had never known any pleasures, she did not covet them. This is how it came about that they broke through the restraint of the partition-wall. One evening in the month of April Jacques returned home worn out with fatigue, having fasted since the morning, and intensely sad with that vague sadness which has no exact cause, which comes over us anywhere, at any time—a sort of apoplexy of the heart, to which those unfortunate beings who live alone are particularly subject. Jacques, feeling stifled in his narrow cell, opened the window to breathe a little. The evening was fine, and the setting sun was displaying its melancholy enchantments on the hills of Montmartre. Jacques

remained pensively at his casement, listening to the winged choir of springtime harmonies singing in the quiet of eve, and that increased his sadness. Seeing a croaking raven fly before him, he thought of the time when ravens brought bread to Elijah ; and he said to himself that ravens are not so charitable now. Then, able to endure this no longer, he closed the window, drew the curtain, and, since he had no money to buy oil for his lamp, he lighted a candle of resin that he had brought back with him from an excursion to the Grande Chartreuse. Growing sadder and sadder, he filled his pipe.

" Fortunately I have still tobacco enough to hide the pistol," he muttered, and began to smoke.

My friend Jacques must have been very sad that evening to think of hiding the pistol. It was his last resource in extreme cases, and it was generally successful. This is how it was done ; Jacques smoked tobacco on which he had poured a few drops of laudanum, and he smoked until the cloud of smoke from his pipe had become so thick as to hide from him all the objects in the little room, and especially a pistol that hung on the wall. It needed some ten pipes to do this. When the pistol had become quite invisible, it almost always happened that the smoke and the laudanum combined sent Jacques to sleep ; and it happened just as often that his sadness left him on the threshold of his dreams.

But this evening he had used up his tobacco, the pistol was completely hidden, and still Jacques was grievously sad. This evening Mademoiselle Francine, on the contrary, was particularly cheerful on returning home ; and there was no cause for her cheerfulness any more than for Jacques' sadness. Hers was the sort of gaiety that drops from heaven, and that God puts into good hearts. Thus Mademoiselle Francine was in a joyous humour, and she sang as she mounted the staircase. But just as she was about to open her door, a gust of wind from the open landing-window suddenly extinguished her light.

" Dear me, how tiresome ! " exclaimed the young girl. " Now I shall have to go down and up six flights of stairs again."

Then, perceiving a light beneath Jacques' door, an impulse of laziness, combined with a feeling of curiosity, suggested to her to go and beg a light of the artist. " It is a service that neighbours render one another daily," thought she, " and cannot be misconstrued." She therefore gave two little taps at Jacques' door, which he opened, a little surprised at this late visit. But hardly had she made a step

into the room, when the smoke with which it was filled suffocated her ; and, without being able to speak a word, she fell fainting into a chair, and let her candle and key fall to the ground. It was midnight, and every one in the house was fast asleep. Jacques did not think it advisable to call for help, for he feared to bring his neighbour into an uncomfortable situation. He therefore merely opened the window to let in a little fresh air ; and when he had thrown a few drops of water into the young girl's face, he saw her open her eyes and gradually come to herself.

When, at the end of five minutes, she had entirely recovered consciousness, Francine explained her motive for having come to the artist, and apologised much for what had happened.

" Now I am well again," added she, " I can return to my own room."

And he had already opened the door before she perceived that she had forgotten to light her candle, and had not the key of her room.

" Silly that I am," said she, applying her candle to the resin-taper. " I came in here to fetch a light, and I was going away without it."

But at that very moment the draught in the room, caused by the open door and window, suddenly put out the light, and the two young people were in the dark.

" One might think it was done on purpose," said Francine. " Forgive me, sir, for all the trouble I am giving you ; and be so good as to strike a light, so that I may find my key."

" Certainly, mademoiselle," answered Jacques, as he felt about for his matches.

He very soon found them ; but a strange idea crossed his mind. He slipped the matches into his pocket, exclaiming :

" Alas, mademoiselle, here is a new difficulty. I have not a single match by me ; I used the last when I came in."

" This is an audaciously well-planned artifice," thought he to himself.

" Dear, dear ! " exclaimed Francine. " I could easily get back to my room without a light ; the room is not so large that I could lose my way in it. But I must have my key. I beg of you, sir, help me to look for it ; it must be on the floor."

" Let us look, mademoiselle," said Jacques.

And there were they both in the dark hunting for the object of their search ; but, as though they were both guided by the same instinct, it happened that during this search their hands, which were feeling

about in the same place, met each other ten times a minute. And as they were both equally clumsy, they did not find the key.

"The moon, which is now hidden by the clouds, shines full on my room," said Jacques. "Let us wait a little; presently it may illuminate our search."

And so, while they awaited the rising of the moon, they began to chat. A chat in the midst of darkness, in a narrow chamber, on a spring night; a chat, which, at first frivolous and insignificant, gradually touches on the chapter of confidences—well, you know to what that leads. Sentences after a while become confused, full of reticence; the voice low; words alternate with sighs; hands meet and complete the thought which mounts from the heart to the lips, and—— Seek the conclusion in your own memory, O young couples! Recall it, young man, recall it, young woman, who walk to-day hand-in-hand, and who had never seen each other two days ago.

At last the moon unveiled, and its clear light poured into the room. Mademoiselle Francine started from her musings with a little cry.

"What ails you?" asked Jacques, putting his arm round her waist.

"Nothing," murmured Francine. "I thought I heard some one knock." And, without Jacques observing it, she kicked under a piece of furniture the key she had just perceived.

She did not want to find it.

I have promised you a muff; and I will give it you presently, as my friend Jacques did to his poor friend Francine, who had become his mistress, as I explained to you in the blank lines above. She was fair, was Francine—fair and lively, which is not usual. She met with Jacques, and she loved him. Their union lasted six months. They had met in the spring; they parted in the autumn. Francine was consumptive; she knew it, and her friend knew it too. A fortnight after he became intimate with the young girl he had heard it from one of his friends, who was a doctor. "She will leave you when the leaves are yellow," he had said.

Francine had heard this verdict, and perceived the despair that it caused her friend.

"What matter the yellow leaves?" she said to him, throwing all her love into a smile. "What matters the autumn? We are in summer now, and the leaves are green; let us make use of it, my friend."

When you see me ready to leave this life, you will take me in your arms and kiss me, and you will forbid me to go. I am obedient, you know, and I shall stay."

And thus this charming creature encountered during five months the troubles of Bohemian life, with a song and a smile on her lips. As for Jacques, he let himself be blinded. His friend often said to him, "Francine is getting worse ; she needs care." Then Jacques ran about all over Paris trying to obtain the needful means for carrying out the doctor's directions ; but Francine would not have him speak of it, and threw the medicines out of the window. In the night, when her cough seized her, she would leave the room and go out on to the landing, so that Jacques might not hear her.

One day, when they had both gone to the country, Jacques perceived a tree whose foliage was turning yellow. He looked sadly at Francine, who walked slowly and somewhat musingly.

Francine saw Jacques turn pale, and she guessed the cause of his pallor.

"Go along with you, you are foolish !" said she, kissing him. "We are only in July ; there are three months still to October ; and by loving each other night and day, as we do, we shall double the time we have to spend together. And besides, if I should feel worse when the leaves turn yellow, we will go and live together in a pine-wood : there the leaves are always green."

In the month of October Francine was obliged to keep her bed. Jacques' friend attended her. The little chamber in which they lodged was situated at the very top of the house and looked out into a yard, whence uprose a tree which daily lost more and more leaves. Jacques had put a curtain before the window to hide this tree from the invalid, but Francine insisted on his drawing back the curtain.

"O my friend," said she to Jacques, "I will give you a hundred times as many kisses as it has leaves." And she would add, "Besides, I am a great deal better. I shall soon go out ; but as it will be cold, and I do not want to have red hands, you shall buy me a muff."

During her whole illness this muff was her only dream.

On All Saints' Eve, seeing Jacques more distressed than usual, she wanted to cheer him ; and to show him that she was better, she got up. The doctor arrived at that moment, and forced her to go back to bed.

" Jacques," he whispered to the artist. " be brave. All is over ; Francine is dying."

Jacques burst into tears.

" You may give her anything she asks for now," added the doctor ; " there is no more hope."

Francine heard with her eyes what the doctor had said to her lover.

" Do not listen to him ! " exclaimed she, stretching out her arms to Jacques ; " do not listen to him, he lies ! We will go out together to-morrow ; it is All Saints' Day. It will be cold ; go and buy me a muff, I beg of you, for I am afraid of getting chilblains this winter."

Jacques was going out with his friend, but Francine detained the doctor.

" Go and get my muff," said she to Jacques ; " get the best, so that it may last a long time." But when she was alone with the doctor, she said, " Oh, sir, I am going to die, and I know it ! But before you go, find me something that will give me strength for one night. I beg of you, make me beautiful for one more night ; and after that let me die, since the Lord does not wish me to live any longer."

As the doctor was consoling her to the best of his power, a northeasterly blast blew into the room, and threw upon the sick-bed a yellow leaf, torn from the tree in the little yard. Francine drew back the curtain, and saw that the tree was now quite bare.

" It is the last," she said, as she placed the leaf under her pillow.

" You will not die till to-morrow," said the doctor ; " you have one night more."

" Oh, what happiness ! " cried the young girl. " A winter's night ! It shall be long."

Jacques came back : he brought a muff.

" It is very pretty," said Francine ; " I shall wear it for going out."

Next day, All Saints' Day, while the Angelus bell was ringing, her last agony seized her, and her whole body began to tremble.

" My hands are cold," she murmured ; " give me my muff." And she plunged her poor hands into the fur.

" It is over," said the doctor ; " go and kiss her."

Jacques pressed his lips on those of his love.

At the last moment they wanted to remove the muff, but she clutched it in her hands.

" No, no," she said ; " leave it me ; it is winter, and so cold. Ah,

my poor Jacques ! ah, my poor Jacques ! what will become of you ?
O my God ! ”

And the next day Jacques was alone.

After some silent prayers the procession moved towards the cemetery. When it had come to the appointed grave the Bohemian brotherhood, with bared heads, grouped themselves around it. Jacques stood at the brink ; his friend, the doctor, supported his arm. In the midst of his sobs the doctor heard this cry of egotism escape from his lips.

“ O my youth ! it is you that they bury.”

“THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA”

HENRI MÜRGER

MARCEL had worked for five or six years upon the famous painting which he said was meant to represent the Passage of the Red Sea; and for five or six years this masterpiece of colour had been obstinately rejected by the jury. Indeed, from its constant journeying back and forth, from the artist's studio to the Salon, and from the Salon to the studio, the painting knew the road so well that you needed only to set it on castors and it would have found its way alone to the Louvre. Marcel, who had repainted the picture ten times, and minutely gone over it from top to bottom, vowed that only a personal hostility on the part of the members of the jury could account for the ostracism which annually turned him away from the Salon, and in his idle moments he had composed, in honour of those watch-dogs of the Academy, a little dictionary of insults, with illustrations of a savage irony. This collection gained celebrity and enjoyed, among the studios and in the École des Beaux-Arts, the same sort of popular success as that achieved by the immortal complaint of Giovanni Bellini, painter by appointment to the Grand Sultan of the Turks; every dauber in Paris had a copy stored away in his memory.

For a long time Marcel had not allowed himself to be discouraged by the emphatic refusals which greeted him at every exhibition. He was comfortably settled in his opinion that his picture was, in a modest way, the companion piece long awaited by “The Wedding of Cana,” that gigantic masterpiece whose dazzling splendour the dust of three centuries has not dimmed. Accordingly, each year, at the time of the Salon, Marcel sent his picture to be examined by the jury. Only, in order to throw the committee off the track and if possible to make them abandon the policy of exclusion which they seemed to have adopted toward “The Passage of the Red Sea,” Marcel, without in any way disturbing the general scheme of his picture, modified certain details and changed its title.

For instance, on one occasion it arrived before the jury under the name of “The Passage of the Rubicon”; but Pharaoh, poorly disguised

under Caesar's mantle, was recognised and repulsed with all the honours that were his due.

The following year, Marcel spread over the level plane of his picture a layer of white representing snow, planted a pine-tree in one corner, and clothing an Egyptian as a grenadier of the Imperial Guard, re-christened the painting "The Passage of the Beresina."

The jury, which on that very day had polished its spectacles on the lining of its illustrious coat, was not in any way taken in by this new trick. It recognised perfectly well the persistent painting by, above all, a big brute of a horse of many colours, which was rearing out of one of the waves of the Red Sea. The coat of that horse had served Marcel for all his experiments in colour, and in private conversation he called it his synoptic table of fine tones, because he had reproduced, in their play of light and shade, all possible combinations of colour. But once again, insensible to this detail, the jury seemed scarcely able to find blackballs enough to emphasize their refusal of "The Passage of the Beresina."

"Very well," said Marcel; "no more than I expected. Next year I shall send it back under the title of 'Passage des Panoramas.'"

"That will be one against them—against them—against them, them, them," sang his friend the musician Schaunard, fitting the words to a new air he had been composing—a terrible air, noisy as a gamut of thunder-claps, and the accompaniment to which was a terror to every piano in the neighbourhood.

"How could they refuse that picture without having every drop of the vermillion in my Red Sea rise up in their faces and cover them with shame?" murmured Marcel, as he gazed at the painting. "When one thinks that it contains a good hundred crowns' worth of paint, and a million of genius, not to speak of all my fair youth, fast growing bald as my hat! But they shall never have the last word; until my dying breath I shall keep on sending them my painting. I want to engrave it upon their memory."

"That is certainly the surest way of ever getting it engraved," said another Bohemian, Gustave Colline, in a plaintive voice, adding to himself, "That was a good one, that was—really a good one; I must get that off the next time I am asked out."

Marcel continued his imprecations, which Schaunard continued to set to music.

"Oh, they won't accept me," said Marcel. "Ah! the government pays them, boards them, gives them the decorations, solely for the

purpose of refusing me once a year, on the 1st of March. I see their idea clearly now—I see it perfectly clearly ; they are trying to drive me to break my brushes. They hope, perhaps, by refusing my Red Sea, to make me throw myself out of the window in despair. But they know very little of the human heart if they expect to catch me with such a clumsy trick. I shall no longer wait for the time of the annual Salon. Beginning with to-day, my work becomes the canvas of Damocles, eternally suspended over their existence. Henceforward I am going to send it once a week to each one of them, at their homes, in the bosom of their families, in the full heart of their private life. It shall trouble their domestic joy, it shall make them think that their wine is sour, their dinner burned, their wives bad-tempered. They will very soon become insane, and will have to be put in strait-jackets when they go to the Academy, on the days when there are meetings. That idea pleases me.”

A few days later, when Marcel had already forgotten his terrible plans for vengeance upon his persecutors, he received a visit from Father Medicis. For that was the name by which the brotherhood called a certain Jew, whose real name was Solomon, and who at that time was well known throughout the Bohemia of art and literature, with which he constantly had dealings. Father Medicis dealt in all sorts of bric-à-brac. He sold complete sets of furniture from twelve francs up to a thousand crowns. He would buy anything, and knew how to sell it again at a profit. His shop, situated in the Place du Carrousel, was a fairy spot where one could find everything that one might wish. All the products of nature, all the creations of art, all that comes forth from the bowels of the earth or from the genius of man, Medicis found it profitable to trade in. His dealings included everything, absolutely everything that exists ; he even put a price upon the Ideal. Medicis would even buy ideas, to use himself or to sell again. Known to all writers and artists, intimate friend of the palette, familiar spirit of the writing-desk, he was the Asmodeus of the arts. He would sell you cigars in exchange for the plot of a sensational novel, slippers for a sonnet, a fresh fish for a paradox ; he would talk at so much an hour with newspaper reporters whose duty was to record society scandals. He would get you a pass to parliament, or invitations to private parties ; he gave lodgings by the night, the week, or the month to homeless artists, who paid him by making copies of old masters in the Louvre. The green-room had no secrets for him ; he could place your plays for you with some manager ; he could obtain

for you all sorts of favours. He carried in his head a copy of the almanac of twenty-five thousand addresses, and knew the residence, the name, and the secrets of all the celebrities, even the obscure ones.

Coming among the Bohemians, with that knowing air which distinguished him, the Jew divined that he had arrived at a propitious moment. As a matter of fact, the four friends were at that moment gathered in council, and under the domination of a ferocious appetite were discussing the grave question of bread and meat. It was Sunday, the last day of the month. Fatal day, sinister date !

The entrance of Medicis was accordingly greeted with a joyous chorus, for they knew that the Jew was too sparing of his time to waste it in mere visits of civility ; his presence always announced that he was open to a bargain.

" Good evening, gentlemen," said the Jew ; " how are you ? "

" Colline," said Rodolphe, who was lying in bed, sunk in the delights of maintaining a horizontal line, " practise the duties of hospitality and offer our guest a chair ; a guest is sacred. I salute you, Abraham," added the poet.

Colline drew forward a chair which had about as much elasticity as a mass of bronze and offered it to the Jew. Medicis let himself fall into the chair, and started to complain of its hardness, when he remembered that he himself had once traded it off to Colline in exchange for a profession of faith which he afterward sold to a deputy. As he sat down the pockets of the Jew gave forth a silvery sound, and this melodious symphony threw the four Bohemians into a pleasant frame of mind.

" Now," said Rodolphe, in a low tone, to Marcel, " let us hear the song. The accompaniment sounds all right."

" Monsieur Marcel," said Medicis, " I have come to make your fortune. That is to say, I have come to offer you a superb opportunity to enter into the world of art. Art, as you very well know, Monsieur Marcel, is an arid wilderness in which glory is the oasis."

" Father Medicis," said Marcel, who was on coals of impatience, " in the name of fifty per cent, your revered patron saint, be brief."

" Here is the offer," rejoined Medicis. " A wealthy amateur, who is collecting a picture-gallery destined to make the tour of Europe, has commissioned me to procure for him a series of remarkable works. I come to give you a chance to be included in this collection. In one word, I come to purchase your ' Passage of the Red Sea.' "

" Money down ? " asked Marcel.

" Money down," answered the Jew, sounding forth the full orchestra of his pockets.

" Go on, Medicis," said Marcel, showing his painting. " I wish to leave to you the honour of fixing for yourself the price of this work of art, which is priceless."

The Jew laid upon the table fifty crowns in bright new silver.

" Continue," said Marcel ; " that is a good beginning."

" Monsieur Marcel," said Medicis, " you know very well that my first word is always my last word. I shall add nothing more. But think ! fifty crowns ; that makes one hundred and fifty francs ! "

" A paltry sum," answered the artist. " In the robe of my Pharaoh alone is fifty crowns' worth of cobalt. Pay me at least something for my work."

" Hear my last word," replied Medicis. " I will not add a penny more ; but I offer dinner to all your friends, wines included, and after dessert I will pay in gold."

" Do I hear any one object ? " howled Colline, striking three blows of his fist upon the table. " It is a bargain."

" Come on," said Marcel. " I agree."

" I will send for the picture to-morrow," said the Jew. " Come, gentlemen, let us start. Your places are all set."

The four friends descended the stairs, singing the chorus from *The Huguenots*, " To the table, to the table."

Medicis treated the Bohemians in a fashion altogether splendid. He offered them a lot of things which up to now had remained for them a mystery. Dating from this dinner, lobster ceased to be a myth to Schaunard, and he acquired a passion for that amphibian which was destined to increase to the verge of delirium.

A week after this festivity Marcel learned in what gallery his picture had found a place. Passing through the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, he stopped in the midst of a crowd that was staring at a sign newly placed above a shop. This sign was none other than Marcel's painting, which had been sold by Medicis to a dealer in provisions. Only " The Passage of the Red Sea " had once again undergone a modification and bore a new title. A steamboat had been added to it, and it was now called " In the Port of Marseilles." A flattering ovation arose among the crowd when they discovered the picture. And Marcel turned away delighted with this triumph, and murmured softly : " The voice of the people is the voice of God ! "

AUGUSTE VITU
1823-1891

THE SECOND VIOLIN

WHILST I was staying at W—— I never missed a single performance at the opera. There was a masterpiece given every night : *The Freischütz*, *The Huguenots*, *Robert le Diable*, *Don Juan*, *The Magic Flute*, etc. All these operas were well put on, great attention being paid to every detail, so that the whole result was all that could be desired.

I do not for a moment say that the artists were irreproachable, and there were certainly not many good soloists in the large orchestra, but yet they all seemed to understand the thing they were performing, and to observe most scrupulously the lights and shades as the composer had meant them, and as, perhaps, only a German or an Italian orchestra ever does observe them. The baritone, for instance, did not attempt to drown the tenor, nor the tenor the prima-donna ; so the general effect was quite satisfactory.

One evening when *The Huguenots* was being given, I set myself to follow the orchestra in the development of the piece. It is a most enjoyable occupation to analyse a piece and to study it note by note when you know the score thoroughly. It always seems to me that in doing this you obtain the same kind of pleasure as when, after riding on horseback through a forest, you return to explore it more thoroughly, and to gather the flowers which you had not noticed the first time.

My place was in the first row of the orchestra stalls, so that I could lean on the balustrade which separated me from the musicians, and when the contra-bass was played I could feel the vibration in my arms. To my left were the wind instruments, and just in front of me the second violins. Among the latter I had noticed the very first night a young man, whose happy-looking face caused me some surprise.

To my mind there is nothing more unsatisfactory than the part which the second violin takes. All the lovely melodies belong to the first violin, and, as though out of compassion, every now and then the seconds are permitted to attempt a kind of imitation of the air,

then some arpeggios, and the strings are pulled and almost beaten like a drum, whilst the melody itself is taken up by some other instrument. It seems to me, then, that the second violins, condemned thus to do all the filling in, all the servile work as it were, must get morose, taciturn, and spiteful, and I came to the conclusion that this one in the orchestra of the theatre of W—— must be an exception to the rule.

He was young and handsome ; he had an oval-shaped face ; soft, light curly hair, and such happy-looking blue eyes. He appeared to play with the greatest ease, evidently knowing all by heart, as he only glanced every now and then carelessly at the score. His eyes, and evidently his thoughts too, were elsewhere.

Very soon I thought I had found out, at any rate, where his thoughts were. He was seated to the right of the stage, and, consequently, was exactly opposite the stage-box on the left. He could see everything which went on in this box, and I noticed that he took advantage of his opportunities.

Of course there was a woman in the box, and I observed that she was quite youthful and very beautiful. She was, perhaps, just a trifle over-dressed for one so young. The diamonds in her hair flashed every time she moved, and she appeared to be paying just about as much attention to the stage as the young violinist did to his score. Once I happened to be looking at them when their eyes met, and I saw that her cheeks turned pale just as though all the blood in her veins had suddenly rushed to her heart, while a flush came over the young musician's pale face.

During the interval I overheard several snatches of conversation around me which enlightened me partially. Two young men, who were looking through their glasses into the box on the left of the stage, spoke of this beautiful girl as the Countess Ulrica von Hanzig, and I knew that that family was a branch of the reigning house of W——.

As I said, though, the information only partially enlightened me, for if the beautiful woman with her flashing diamonds were of such high birth, how was it that she could be so interested in a poor violinist ? For interested she was, I felt sure from the glance I had seen pass between them.

I immediately began to build up in my own mind a little romance, with the Countess Ulrica and the second violin of the orchestra for my heroine and hero. Every time the curtain fell I noticed that my

young friend, instead of going out with his fellow-musicians, simply put down his instrument, leaned back in his chair, and gazed up at his idol. This was certainly strange, especially considering that the Countess Ulrica was not alone in her box. There was an elderly man with her, probably either her father or her husband; and he must surely have noticed the admiration expressed on the young violinist's face. It seemed to me once that the elderly man was smiling at him, but afterwards I thought that must surely have been my imagination. Anyhow, the whole affair seemed to me rather mysterious and very interesting to watch.

When the curtain rose, I became so absorbed in the opera that I completely forgot the Countess Ulrica, but, as luck would have it, when I went home that night I was destined to see something else of the little comedy. I was walking leisurely down the wide staircase at the close of the opera, and as I was in no particular hurry, I had stepped aside two or three times to let some of the pushing, scrambling people get out, when I saw in front of me the Countess Ulrica. She was just getting into her carriage as I reached the door, and the elderly man took his seat beside her. The carriage-door was left open, and I noticed that the young Countess kept leaning forward as though looking out for some one.

Presently the violinist I had been watching during the opera appeared on the scene, carrying his instrument in its case under his arm. He stepped into the carriage, sat down opposite the young Countess, took both her hands in his, and then the carriage moved away.

After this, every night I used to watch this trio at the opera, and it seemed to me that the Countess and the violinist were evidently more and more in love with each other every evening, but, of course, I had no means of getting to the bottom of the mystery. One evening I found that my usual place was occupied by a young officer, who appeared to be the centre of attraction to a little group of the most dandified men in W—. The officer was fair, and just the type of a Hanoverian. He looked half German, half English, was very handsome, and had that high and mighty, rather consequential air which women adore, and which exasperates beyond endurance all other men.

I took the nearest seat I could get to my own, and I could not help overhearing the conversation of the little group. It was the usual kind of club talk: horses, women, and society gossip. I could gather from

the young officer's questions that he had only arrived that day in W——, after being garrisoned in some other town. Without wishing it in the least, I thus became acquainted with all the gossip going amongst the high life of W——.

Just before the curtain rose, the door of the box on the left of the stage opened and the Countess Ulrica entered with the elderly man, who appeared to follow her about like her shadow. She was more beautiful than ever that night, and I noticed that her appearance caused quite a sensation. I also observed that many people glanced from her to the young violinist, and several ladies put their fans up to hide their smiles. The officer who had taken my place seemed more surprised than any one else. He put his eyeglass on, and then I heard him exclaim :

"By Jove! if there isn't my cousin Ulrica! Let me pass, you fellows: I must go up and speak to her."

The fair-haired warrior went away with a most self-complacent expression on his handsome face, and a minute or two later he appeared in the box in question, evidently to the Countess Ulrica's surprise. He put on a most familiar, almost affectionate, manner, and appeared to be talking to her most confidentially. He had all his trouble for nothing, though, as she kept looking at her violinist. I happened to glance at him too, just as the officer was leaning forward and saying something to the young Countess in the most confidential manner. The violinist's face flushed, and he frowned ominously.

One of my friends who has a great fancy for chemistry said to me one day :

"I do not know anything that has a stronger freezing power than a woman's disdain; in some instances, and under special circumstances, I am sure a woman could ice a bottle of champagne by only looking at it."

That night I had an example of the truth of what my friend asserted, for the refrigerating influence of the Countess Ulrica on the young officer was wonderful. I noticed that he seemed to lose his self-assurance and was reduced to fumbling with his gloves, and when he left the box and came down again to his place he was stroking his moustache nervously.

"Stolberg has had the cold shoulder to-night!" remarked one of the dandies, just before the young officer returned; and the others nodded.

Stolberg, however, not knowing that he had just been the subject of remark, said, as he sat down :

“ Why, just think, my cousin Ulrica is married ! ”

“ Ah ! ” said one of the other young men, half-condescendingly and in a half-jesting tone.

“ She gave me the cold shoulder, quite, and I should like to know whether she is angry or whether it was just indifference ! ”

No one answered, but most of us glanced at the young musician, who was at that moment brandishing his bow over the strings with all the energy of a savage cutting his enemy's throat. There was an awkward pause, and then one of the young officer's friends remarked :

“ Then your beautiful cousin was by no means gushing just now, Stolberg ? ”

“ No, indeed, Max, and it is all the more strange that she should behave in that way to *me*, as it is certainly the first time she has treated *me* coldly.”

“ Since her marriage, you mean ? ”

“ Why, of course, considering that that event has taken place during my absence, and that I was not even informed of it. The question is : Was the marriage arranged for her against her will ? I am inclined to think it was, although she did not tell me so.”

The second violin at this moment introduced some chords into the *Freischütz* which would certainly have astonished Weber, and I could see that one or two of Stolberg's friends were on thorns, but they did not dare to say anything lest the whole affair should end in a scene.

The young officer looked furious, and it was easy to see that he was jealous of his cousin's husband.

“ Do any of you know this famous Count von Hanzig ? ” he asked presently, trying to appear to speak carelessly.

His friends glanced at each other, some of them annoyed at the turn the affair had taken, whilst the others were enjoying the idea of the forthcoming scandal.

“ Ah ! I see by your silence that he does not belong to our society, whoever he may be. Who on earth can have advised Ulrica to make such an insane sort of marriage ? ”

The young musician rose from his seat and advancing towards Stolberg said, very distinctly :

“ I am the Count von Hanzig.”

There was a cry from some one in the box on the left of the stage, the people in the orchestra stalls rose in confusion, and the opera was interrupted. There was such a buzz of voices that I could not catch all that passed between the two men, but I did gather that the violinist refused the offer of two or three of the young dandies who wished to act as his seconds.

"No, thank you, gentlemen," he said, proudly; "I do not care to have any of you who did not think it worth while to interfere before I was insulted, and especially as you doubtless consider that '*I do not belong to your society*,' as Herr von Stolberg said. No, I should prefer a poor musician like I am myself, and I would not refuse a perfect stranger who would offer me his hand loyally."

"Then will you take me?" I said, pushing my way past one or two of the young men. "I have overheard the whole of the affair."

He grasped my hand and shook it cordially. I gave him my card with my address, and turning to Stolberg, he said:

"We shall see each other to-morrow," and then, without another word, he disappeared through the low orchestra door.

I glanced at the stage box and saw that they were carrying the Countess Ulrica out, for she had fainted.

It is three years ago since all this happened, and to this day I cannot tell what induced me to mix myself up in a quarrel which was certainly not my business at all. I was interested in the young violinist, indignant with his adversary, and then, too, I felt curious to know more about this romantic marriage, so that all these motives together caused me to act on the impulse of the moment. I had put up in the Dorothea Strasse, and it was there that Count Albert von Hanzig came to call upon me the next morning at eight o'clock.

"I want to tell you something about myself," he said, as he took the chair I placed for him; "you must forgive my abruptness, but my time now is so precious."

I was going to interrupt him, but he stopped me and said:

"I understand that out of delicacy you want to tell me that it is not necessary for me to confide in you, but I should all the same prefer to do so. You have generously taken up the cudgels on my behalf, although I am a perfect stranger to you. It is only right that you should, at any rate, know something about the man whose part you have taken. It must certainly appear strange to you to find the Count von Hanzig acting as second violin in the theatre of W—— at a

salary of a hundred florins, and I should like to explain the mystery to you.

“ In the first place, I am not German, but Polish, and my family belong to the Grand Duchy of Posen. The House of Hanzig took its part nobly in the great national war of 1792, so that its name is written in letters of blood in the history of our country, whilst it has for generations stood high amongst the nobility of Poland. My father, brought up as he had been to honour the traditions of our country, could not remain deaf to the voice of his conscience, and in 1831 he took up arms and was one of the first victims at Warsaw.

“ I was left an orphan, then, at the age of nine, and made my escape from the city, where I should certainly have been massacred. I had no idea in my flight where I was going, but kept hurrying on as straight as I could go, until at last my strength gave way, and I just lay down on a great plain all covered with snow.

“ A well-known musician, who was emigrating after having fought valiantly, happened to find me, and he cared for me and gave me refreshments, and, when I could walk, took me on with him. We travelled through part of Germany on foot, the great composer earning our daily bread with his violin. He was on his way to France, where he was sure of a home with some friends, but he could not take me with him there.

“ Some old friends of his in Germany interested themselves in me for his sake, and I was placed at the W—— Conservatorium to study music. At sixteen I was admitted to the orchestra of the opera as second violin.

“ Later on I heard that my benefactor was dead : sorrow and exile had done their work, and neither the hospitality he met with in France, nor yet the homage rendered to his genius, could make up to him for all he had suffered in losing his country. I have always felt deep gratitude towards him, as, if he had not taken pity on me, I might have had to beg my bread like so many of those of my poor compatriots who escaped the Russian guns had to do.

“ Fortunately for me my tastes were simple, and there was nothing repugnant to me in the career which seemed to be my future lot in life. My only ambition was to become some day conductor of the orchestra in the theatre of the Grand Duchy. I was wrapped up in my work and musical studies, and had very little leisure time for thinking of anything else.

"One evening, however, at the opera there was to be a new work given, and the Grand Duke was to be present. All the important families of the Duchy were that evening in their boxes, and I glanced round at the house to see the general effect of the magnificent costumes and the flashing diamonds. I was in reality little interested in all these great people, for I felt myself separated from them by an insurmountable barrier. You see," he added, smiling bitterly, "the violinist's bow may ennoble the hand of an ordinary citizen provided he be talented, but it only degrades the hand of a fallen count.

"Well, on the evening in question, in a box just opposite to me, a lovely girl was sitting. I was indeed perfectly startled by her beauty, for never in my dreams had I imagined any woman so exquisitely graceful and fascinating. In my delight I know that I smiled, and it seemed to me that she looked down with interest at me. One of my comrades told me that it was the Countess Ulrica von Schaffembourg, the daughter of one of the Grand Duke's Chamberlains. The thought of my position at once flashed across me, and I felt humiliated to the very dust, and then almost angrily I seized my violin, and during the whole evening I carefully refrained from looking again at that box.

"Ulrica, however, came again several times to the opera, and it always seemed to me that there was the same look of interest on her face whenever our eyes met. I did my utmost not to give way to the kind of magnetism which attracted my eyes to that box, but all in vain. For a whole month things went on like this, and then, as her father had to go abroad on political business, she was placed, in the meantime, at the convent of Meilen.

"I expect you wonder how I found out all these details. And to this day I hardly know myself how I managed to discover everything I wanted to know. One thing is sure, though, that, as far as anything concerning this girl was in question, I should certainly have found a way to baffle the most skilful diplomat in the world.

"Well, I went on thinking about her, dreaming of her, for two long years. I knew nothing of her character, except what I had read in her eyes. I would have given ten years of my life to have heard the sound of her voice. I began to work now in feverish earnest. I had hitherto looked on my violin as the means of earning my daily bread, but now it seemed to me that it must be more to me, and that I must earn distinction through it. I gave myself up entirely to my musical

studies, and I got on so well that it seemed as though I had every chance of success.

“The next event in my life was the competition at the Conservatorium, which in Germany is, as you know, of considerable importance. I entered my name, and when the day came there was a large and attentive audience. If I could win distinction that day there was some chance for me. My competitors were heard one after the other, and my name happened to be called last.

“You must forgive me if I sound my own praises, but, inspired as I was by love, I played a theme of Handel’s with such feeling that I saw tears in the eyes of some of my judges. My own eyes were moist, too, and I shall never forget the sensation of those few minutes. It was as though all my youth and all my strength were at last having a free course after all the long years that my feelings had been either lying dormant or stifled. I had only the last variation to perform, and my triumph seemed certain. It was a terrible passage, arpeggios, to be played with fearful rapidity from the lowest note to the very highest. It wanted a strong wrist and the lightest fingers. Oh! the accursed variation! But still I felt sure of it, and was going to attack it with perfect confidence. I lifted my bow proudly and then, alas! I suddenly saw Ulrica. The tears were in her eyes, but her face was radiant. All my assurance went, my hand suddenly became feeble, and my fingers uncertain. I hesitated—and that was the end of it, for it was all over with me after that. The concert was over, and there was a murmur of disappointment all through the room, whilst I felt more dead than alive.

“The first prize was, of course, given to another competitor, but out of pity they gave me an accessit. All that did not move me, though; I had seen Ulrica turn pale with emotion; I felt, I knew, that she cared for me, and I thought to myself that is surely more than the first prize at the Conservatorium. Directly after, though, a feeling of despair came over me, and I reproached myself bitterly for my weakness. I had proved myself totally unworthy of her, and she was surely worthy of an emperor. And then, too, was it not, after all, a great misfortune, this unhappy love?—for there was no hope whatever for us. What was to become of me? Just as I was thinking moodily in this strain the Director of the Conservatorium sent for me.

“‘Albert,’ he said, ‘you will find a carriage at the door, which is to take you to the Palace of the Grand Duke.’

"My astonishment was extreme, but, notwithstanding, I went down and got into the carriage without staying a minute to reflect. A major-domo was waiting for me at the door of the palace. He begged me to follow him, and what was my astonishment soon, on finding myself face to face with the Count von Schaffenbourg—Ulrica's father.

" 'Are you Count Albert von Hanzig?' he asked, coldly.

"Upon my reply in the affirmative, he continued:—

" 'I sent for you to ask you to give violin lessons to my daughter—the Countess Ulrica von Schaffenbourg.'

"I could not find a single word to say; I staggered, for I had suddenly turned giddy.

" 'You love her!' he said, smiling.

"I did not answer, but I bowed my head, and how it was that I did not there and then lose my senses I have never been able to fathom, for he continued:—

" 'The son of my old friend Louis von Hanzig can marry the daughter of the Count von Schaffenbourg without its being by any means a *mésalliance*.' Those were his very words, and it seems to me that I shall not forget them to my dying day." The young Count stopped for a minute, too deeply moved by these recollections to be able to continue.

"Ulrica became my wife," he said presently, "and all the happiness which true love alone can give has been ours. I have been happier than I had thought possible in my very wildest dreams, and yet—" The young Count paused again, and his face clouded over when he continued his story. "Our days were just one long *fête*, and we had so much to say—so much always to tell each other. I told her all about my desolate childhood and then about my work and my struggles, and she told me of all her happy days and of her little schemes and plans in order to bring her father to consent to our union and, what was still more, to get him to send for me and to propose it. Oh! how gay and happy we were, and how we laughed at each other's stories.

"Our marriage had naturally caused a lot of gossip in W——, but as the Grand Duke himself approved of it, there was nothing further to be said. Gradually people became accustomed to seeing us together in public, and so forgot the romance of it all. We had not forgotten, though, and my wife wanted to go again for the first time since our marriage to the opera, where we had first met. We went, and we sat in the box on the left of the stage, where you must have

seen Ulrica yesterday evening. It was very strange to me at first to find myself up there instead of with my comrades in the orchestra. Ulrica looked down at the music-stand behind which she had always seen me, and I noticed that she seemed very absent-minded and did not pay any attention to the opera. Every time I looked at her, her eyes were fixed on my old place, and yet my successor did not resemble me much."

The Count smiled as he told me all these details, which were evidently quite fresh in his memory.

"My successor," he continued, after a slight pause, "was a little, bald-headed old man, with a very long, red nose, on which rested a pair of enormous gold spectacles. We went constantly to the opera after that evening, and every time my wife was just the same, until at last I begged her to tell me what it was that was troubling her, and why she took no interest in the music.

" 'Albert,' she exclaimed, 'you know I do not care what the world thinks or says. My one wish, my one desire, is to see you there again in your old place and to listen to you, just as I used to, and live over again those days. It would make me so happy. Oh! I wish that by some miracle it could be so!'

"I did not say anything to my wife, but the next day the little old man with the gold spectacles received his salary to the end of the season, and I, after seeing my wife to her box, left her on some pretence, and then hurried downstairs and took my old place in the orchestra. It was not without a pang that I had decided to do this. I could not help feeling the difference, for I am certain that, no matter in what position in life I had met Ulrica, I should there and then have loved her, and now it seemed to me that if I were to hope to keep her love, I must have recourse to my poor Stradivarius. It was a woman's caprice, her love of the romantic, for now that she was my wife, perfect in every way as she is, I knew that it was from eight o'clock to eleven every night at the opera that I came up to her ideal, and that she loved me with all her soul."

This, then, was what Count von Hanzig had to tell me, and wildly improbable as so much of it sounded, I felt that he was telling me just exactly how matters stood. He was silent again when he had finished his story, and was looking moodily before him. I felt that time was precious, and that I must remind him of the unfortunate business which was now before us.

"And Herr von Stolberg?" I began.

"Ah! I had not spoken of him, because he has only crossed my path in life to bring me bad luck. I believe by some family arrangement it had been intended that he should marry Ulrica, and consequently through me, I suppose, he considered his future prospects blighted."

"Do you think that this duel is absolutely obligatory?"

"What do you think about it as my second?"

"Well, there was no irreparable insult."

"Ah! do not let us waste our time discussing useless questions," interrupted the Count impulsively. "You want, of course, to avoid if possible any bloodshed, but in reality you know as well as I do that there is no help for it. The world would never understand any sentimental explanations, and to the world if I, Albert von Hanzig, act as second violin in the orchestra of the opera, why, I am a disgrace to my name and to my rank. Now, if I am either killed by Lieutenant Stolberg in a duel or if I kill him, no one will dare to reproach me with my violin bow when I have shown that I can also wield a sword."

I had felt this myself before the Count had said it, and I knew really that there was no help for it all. We arranged then to take for the other witness a soldier belonging to the Grand Duke's Guards. In the afternoon Herr von Stolberg's seconds came to call on me: the duel was fixed for the following morning, and the weapon chosen was the sword.

I have never yet come across the man who could be present at a duel and keep his *sang-froid*. The two duellists themselves have their honour and their life at stake, and their moral courage, as a rule, keeps them up. The task of the seconds is a most painful one, and nearly always, on meeting the six men concerned in a duel on their way to the place fixed upon, you will find two of them calmer than the others, and, as a rule, those two are prepared to face death.

We had chosen a field where the light and shade were pretty equally distributed, and a ditch marked the limits. Count von Hanzig was calm and serious, but Herr von Stolberg was just as haughty and contemptuous as the other night at the opera. He bowed, however, very politely, and the preliminaries were then arranged. The two adversaries were just about to commence, and there was dead silence, that terrible silence which makes itself felt when one knows that something tragic is about to take place.

Suddenly, at the other end of the field, the branches of the trees were pushed aside and an officer of high rank in the army made his appearance, followed by a detachment of infantry. As he approached we saw that it was an aide-de-camp of the Grand Duke.

"Follow me," he called out, "in the name of His Royal Highness !"

"Conrad," said Lieutenant Stolberg, turning to one of his seconds, "you'd better call for the fiddlers, the situation is amusing—extremely amusing."

Count von Hanzig did not speak, but his face turned livid with suppressed emotion, and I could see that his hands trembled too.

"I am executing the express order of His Highness, who will not suffer the law as regards duels to be violated in his realm."

"Conrad," said Stolberg again, "the situation is really dramatic : are you not a musician yourself ?"

His friend turned his head away, annoyed at the bad taste displayed by Stolberg, but the latter continued :—

"I pride myself that I am no musician, but it seems to me that a violin duet would be perhaps more easily executed than a sword duet—even if the latter were between men of good blood."

"The Grand Duke has dishonoured me," said Count von Hanzig, bitterly, giving up his sword to the aide-de-camp ; and there was something in the vibration of his voice as he uttered the words that made one feel that the insult was not to be forgotten so easily.

The aide-de-camp took Stolberg's sword too, and then, just as I was going to speak to my new friend and was trying to find something to say which might reconcile him, the officer turned to me and said :—

"The Grand Duke would be glad if you could make it convenient to hasten your departure. He desires me to say that he shall count on your being able to leave within twenty-four hours."

There was no choice left me in the matter. I glanced at Count von Hanzig, and our eyes met in a silent farewell. I then turned and went away, in obedience to the Grand Duke's commands.

A few months ago one of my friends at Constantinople got to know several Hungarian and Polish officers who had served under the command of Georgey, during the struggle taken up by the Magyars against the House of Austria. These refugees used frequently in their long conversations to relate the various romantic or terrible episodes which had come under their notice during that desperate war. One of these stories, which my friend told me after, aroused my attention. It

seems that every one had specially noticed in a volunteer corps commanded by Bern two young men, who were both very handsome, and who had displayed marvellous courage and boldness. The taller and older of the two was not only a good soldier but a wonderful musician, and he often charmed the others by playing Polish airs on a violin which he always had with him ; the other one was so fair and delicate-looking that he might have been taken for a woman.

These two friends were both killed by a detachment of the enemy, which had taken them by surprise. When they died, the stronger one had thrown his arms round the other man, as though to protect him. There was a broken violin just near, and a pistol which had recently been fired ; a scrap torn from a letter was there, too, and it had evidently served for loading the pistol. On this scrap of paper the name of Albert von Hanzig could just be read. This indication was, of course, not enough to establish the identity of the young man, and he was buried there where he fell, together with his companion. They both rest there under a grassy mound, which is covered every spring with violets and marguerites, and these simple flowers serve as their monument.

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

1828-1891

TRANSPOSITION

AT the beginning of 1882, Madame Hortense Daffry, already, at the age of twenty, a widow without children or parents, came to live in the Rue de Lille with Madame de Briel, her grandmother. In her company she felt for the last time the true affection and peaceful joys of family life. It was only two years later that the excellent old lady died, mournful and disquietened at leaving her grand-daughter alone and without protection in the world. For, eighty years old, she had seen all those she had loved and known marry and depart, and no one was left to whom she could recommend her darling Hortense.

During the last month of her life, Madame de Briel, feeling her end was near, had put her affairs in perfect order, to avoid all trouble to her grand-daughter. Furthermore, she had carefully sorted out and arranged her papers, burning with her own hands those she did not think worth preserving. During her illness, she kept near to her in the chest of drawers, a lacquer-box, the key of which, threaded with a ribbon, hung from one of the handles of chiselled bronze. Very often Madame de Briel had the box taken out and held it for hours in her hand, as though wishing to come to a decision about it and dispose of its contents. But death at last surprised her before she had done anything with it, and Madame Daffry felt herself troubled and hesitating when the box came into her hands.

It seemed to her that the best thing would be to destroy it piously without seeking to know the secrets it enclosed. But Hortense did not dare to do this, fearing, on the other hand, that she might fail in some duty and escape from some obligation that she ought to undertake. So she opened the box, and found it full of letters, bearing the addresses, not on separate envelopes in modern fashion, but on sheets of letter paper. As she at once saw, the letters were addressed, not to Madame de Briel, but to Madame Eudoxie Tèrrene, the mother of her grandmother. This great-grandmother Hortense had known with her own eyes, for Madame Tèrrene had died only in 1872 at the age of eighty-five.

But, above all, she had often found her again in a family portrait. Baron Gros had made this portrait of the lovely Eudoxie in the days of her triumphant youth. Now, by the virtue of a strange law whose effects we feel better than we can formulate them, in this image of a great-grandmother, painted fifty-three years before her own birth, Hortense Daffry had recognised her own face, astonishing in its truthfulness and as faithful as a mirror.

For in certain families, at varying intervals, Nature delights in reproducing certain figures, just as a sculptor takes several casts from the same mould. But in these cases, how far does the resemblance go? Does it tell on the feelings, the thoughts, the most secret fibres of the heart? This is one of those mysterious problems of modern science that opens to our mind infinite horizons.

Before having read or even looked at the letters written to her great-grandmother, Madame Daffry suddenly saw a medallion which, having slipped down, stood upright against the side of the box, and she took it out. It was a miniature representing a very young man, in the uniform of an officer of the First Empire, with brown, crisp hair and daring eyes expressing all the ardours of passion and the maddest bravery. Starting from the top of his forehead and reaching almost to his right eyebrow, a red scar, made by some furious sabre stroke, divided into two parts the large broad forehead of this doer of great deeds. At her first glance at the portrait, Hortense, attracted, subdued, conquered, felt in her heart a thousand torments and a thousand delights. She loved. Whom, however? A man long since dead, as his dress clearly indicated—a man she would never see on this earth! But the flame that burns us often makes game of realities and common-sense, and for things to be true it is not at all necessary that they should be possible.

It would not be right to say that Hortense was suddenly struck with love. She had the sense of an ancient passion, long since known with its joys and its pains, which by an unexplained event had been effaced from her memory, and then suddenly, breaking through a veil, had swept up again into her mind, setting it on fire and lighting it up with the flame.

Then she looked at the letters, all signed with the same name, and read them with feverish eagerness. It was not difficult to recover the pulsating story from which they were born. Married quite young to an army contractor, old, selfish, worn out by debauch, Madame

Eudoxie Tèrrene was adored by a young lieutenant of Napoleon named Paul Ferrandier. She was unable to resist the wild passion she had inspired, and the two lovers—handsome, charming, faithful, born for each other—loved like the children they were, and dreamt of eternities of happiness, all the while feeling above their heads the vague beating of the dark wings of Death.

They were soon separated. It was the days of Austerlitz, of Jena, of Eylau, of Friedland, of Wagram. During these glorious years they sometimes met for a few moments ; but the rest of the time, between two battles, between two victories, dusty, blood-spattered, broken with fatigue, Ferrandier wrote Eudoxie the rapid, furious, caressing, burning letters that her great-grand-daughter now re-read, her breast heaving and her eyes wet with tears. It was for Eudoxie, as well as for Napoleon, that he fought in battle after battle across Europe, thinking to give his Emperor the last drop of his blood, and win a throne for his beloved.

Contractor Tèrrene died, and mad with hope, Paul Ferrandier thought of returning to his love, when he was killed at Smolensk, struck by a bullet full in the breast. One of his friends, a brother soldier, to whom he had confided the hope of his approaching marriage, wrote to Madame Tèrrene telling her the terrible news ; and his letter was placed in the box with those from Paul.

What was veritably strange was that the prayers, the memories, the sobs of grief and the cries of passion contained in the letters seemed to Hortense Daffry to have been addressed to her alone. Her soul, violently liberated from all reality, soared in a dizzying flight, amid the joys of impossibilities. She gave herself, wholly, and with rapture, to Paul Ferrandier, without thinking an instant that he had lived in a vanished era, and that he was dead, more than half a century ago, in the tumult of victory. That she would see him one day, soon perhaps, and shake his hand and hear him speak as he had written, was for her something of which there was no shadow of doubt. She waited for the hour of the meeting with ingenuous confidence.

As in those dreams in which we see the most impossible things happen without being astonished at them, she was exempt from all surprise when, spending an evening with Madame de Simore, she heard the maid announce : " Monsieur Paul Ferrandier."

She saw him enter—the Paul she knew, the Paul she adored—absolutely like his portrait, his dark curly hair, his daring eyes, and

the scar down his forehead. The only difference was that he now wore the uniform of a lieutenant of the African Light Cavalry.

No! Madame Daffry was not surprised to see him whom she waited for every minute. But her heart leaped in her white bosom, and she—if there had not been all those men there, all those women in satin and diamonds, a crowd impossible to get through—she would have run to the young man, and fallen in his arms, saying, “Here I am!”

And Paul Ferrandier, after bowing to Madame de Simore, suddenly saw Hortense. Staggering, distracted, white as a sheet, he dragged himself out of the drawing-room by leaning against the walls, and coming to a boudoir, happily empty, he fell his full length on the carpet in a swoon. Madame de Simore, struck by his strange look, followed behind him, and arrived just in time to see Paul, stretched on the ground, senseless and white as death.

As a cousin of Ferrandier, Madame de Simore could take an interest in him without attracting remarks, and it would have been easy for her to appeal for help to a famous doctor that had come to her party. But with the instinct of a woman, she at once guessed that there was some private trouble that must not be revealed to any one. She knelt down before the young man, moistened his temples and forehead, gave him some strong salts to smell, and, lifting his head in her hands, placed a cushion beneath it.

At last Paul came to, and opened his eyes. Then he took from his breast a portrait; it was a miniature that he covered with mad kisses and showed to Madame de Simore.

“Ah! Blanche! Blanche! She exists!” he cried in a frenzy of joy, while his eyes swam with tears.

“Certainly,” said Blanche, “Hortense Daffry exists, and she is my closest friend. But I do not understand how you come by her portrait, and why she is dressed like a lady of the First Empire. But you have never seen her! What is the meaning of the strange attack you have just had?”

“I have just seen her for the first time,” said Ferrandier, “but for years I have loved her with all my soul, with all my strength, with every drop of my blood. It is three years since I first held in my hand this portrait, and it has never left me. In the ambushes, raids, and night-attacks in Africa it has inspired me with courage and scorn of danger and relish for death. For I love her too much to live without

her, and, thinking naturally that she was long since old and dead, I never thought it possible to meet her."

"But you have not told me," said Blanche de Simore, "how the portrait came into your hands?"

"The simplest way in the world," said Paul. "I wanted an old desk in Chinese lacquer that stood in my father's study. He gave it to me at once, and told me that it had been in the family for years. It belonged to one of my great-grand-uncles, named, like myself, Paul Ferrandier. He died at Smolensk, August 17, 1812, lieutenant-colonel in the cuirassiers of the Guards. The keys of the desk were lost; I had the locks broken open, and in one of the drawers I found this divine portrait, which from the first minute became for ever that of my beloved."

"There is a great deal which is strange about the matter," said Madame de Simore, "but the important thing is that Hortense and you are young, and your own masters, and as free as the air. So there is nothing to prevent you falling in love and finishing your story by a happy marriage."

This prediction was not realised. Hortense and Paul met and recognised each other, and tasted for a brief while the joys of paradise. But sent to Tonkin with his regiment, Paul Ferrandier died exactly like his great-grand-uncle, struck by a bullet full in the breast

FIRST LOVE

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

MADAME, said the poet, you ask me at what age love begins. It never begins. For being a lover is the quality of a man, like being a negro, or having a hooked nose. Those who are fated to become lovers have always been so. On this point, as on all others, Shakespeare shows his impeccable genius, by presenting Romeo ready to die through the coldness of Rosaline, at the very moment when he is about to meet Juliet. But this needs supporting by a story of our own day. Here it is :

I was educated in the Coriolis boarding-school, in Rue Richer, where a sad and meagre garden, flanked by two flights of steps and planted with rickety trees, was surrounded by the magnificent grounds of some fine mansions that were destroyed when the Rue de Trévis and the Rue Geoffroy-Marie were constructed. It was a school for the children of the rich ; so the life there was extremely fashionable, although they fed us on poor stuff scarcely good enough for men in a convict prison. Among other things, we boys had so much pocket-money that we were able to buy a complete set of stage properties—curtains of red calico, helmets of cardboard covered with gold and silver foil, swords of small size, but made of steel—with which we amused ourselves on Sunday evenings. We played melodramas and tragedies, partly by memory, partly by improvising our parts. The theatre was merely the big class-room, where we pushed the desks together to make an empty space.

Our masters raised no objection ; for on Sunday evenings in winter the boys subscribed to order from Rollet baskets of cakes costing as much as twenty francs. It was, as I have told you, a school where we had the right to dress in the fashion. Boys from families of friends went about together in couples, in the manner of their uncles and fathers, and often took pleasure in wearing the same kind of dress. One of the most charming couples in the school, united by brotherly affection, was that formed by Chéd'homme and Pessonnable, both of them sons of wealthy shipowners of Havre. I can still see them in the

playing-ground in green jerseys with small white lines, and in little brown suits in the college classes. My two school-fellows were like myself, about thirteen years old. Chéd'homme had a girl's face, white and clear, with fine fair hair that curled naturally. Personnaille had short brushy hair on a little head that was already full of strength and wildness.

One day as we were walking down the long Rue de Provence, Chéd'homme, who sat next to me in class, said with some hesitation that he had a secret to tell me. And speaking in his soft musical voice, he said that he had fallen in love with Rosalie. She was our little linen-maid, thin, dark, with eyes of fire, who mended the sheets and serviettes. Chéd'homme had gone into the linen-room to get a new tie, and dropping a pin, he had knelt down to pick it up. Then Rosalie had put her two hands over his eyes and kissed his hair. They had sworn to love each other for ever, and were arranging a meeting-place when Aunt Bégat, the withered housekeeper of the school, entered and interrupted the love affair.

He told me all this in broken words, in the delightful fever of adolescence. It was early in April; the air was full of the warm exhalations of spring; puffs of fragrance came to us from the neighbouring gardens, and on the theatre posters we read the title of romantic tragedies. I eagerly drank in the words of Chéd'homme. They fell on my heart like fire on a trail of gunpowder; for I was in love also, but with Chloe, with Pyrrha, with Phyllis—with all the women of the odes of Horace.

The drama developed with surprising rapidity. I was separated for some days from Chéd'homme; my play-time was spent in writing pensums that I had earned by an ode of three syllables found in my desk; and we were not placed together when we went out. I found myself at last by his side, ten days after our first talk. He was pale, upset, and so angry that he could scarcely speak to me.

"He has betrayed me," he said. "Personnaille! My friend, my brother! He has done it!"

Vainly I tried to interrupt him.

"I will kill him," he said.

Then he told me all. A duel had been arranged between him and Personnaille for the next day. During the lesson from twelve to one, they would both go out and fight in the garden, having for witnesses the fifty boys of the class, who, through the curtainless windows,

could easily see them. As for Duriez, the master of the class, they counted on his invincible imbecility, and they were certain that he only would not see anything.

As you can imagine, I used every possible argument to make him give up his plans.

"And my honour!" he cried, like the juvenile lead on the stage, shaking his pretty curls. "But it isn't that," he added, bursting into tears; "but since Rosalie has deceived me, I must die. You see, I love her!" And again he wept abundantly.

I never had for a moment the idea of denouncing my chum. For I used to think then—as I do still—that the end never justifies the means.

But what is very strange is that the scheme of these poor children was carried out, point by point, without any difficulty. The next day, during the lesson, both of them found a pretext to leave the room. We soon saw them in the garden, in shirt and trousers, mounted on one of the gymnastic apparatus, and holding in their hands their naked swords—the little swords taken from our stage properties. They arranged to fight at this height, so that they should be clearly seen by all of us. Our fifty chests panted. Duriez could not understand the general inattention to the lesson; but thanks to his supernatural stupidity, he did not perceive the ardent looks that, one after the other, we cast by stealth towards the garden.

Brave, furious, bathed in sunlight, our two friends were as pretty as angels. The duel opened, violent and atrocious, for they knew nothing, or next to nothing, of the art of fencing; and in their anger they did not notice the cuts they received, and the blood that stained their shirts. Finally, by a horrible stroke, Chéd'homme, struck on the forehead by Pessonnable's sword that made a large hole and broke in the wound, fell backward from the top of the wooden horse. Pessonnable sprang down to him, weeping and staunching the flow of blood. An immense cry rose from all our throats. We jumped over the tables and flung ourselves in a crowd into the garden, and there at the same time arrived Monsieur and Madame Coriolis, the Demoiselles Coriolis, the professors, Aunt Bégat, the servants, everybody in the place.

You can guess the terror and the fright of this drama. For when Chéd'homme was put in bed, not in the infirmary, but in a bedroom given up by one of the Coriolis girls, he fell into a profound swoon, and the doctors could not say that he would live. Two months passed,

during which the whole school lived as in a dream, full of anguish and agitation, before he was sufficiently well to be sent away to his parents. As for Pessonnaille, the very day of the fight, he was put in a coach, with a professor entrusted with taking him to Havre and giving him up to his family, to punish or not as they pleased.

Well, Madame, thirty-eight years passed after these events of our childhood before I met Chéd'homme. He had become the celebrated traveller whose achievements are not unknown to you. He had struggled, fought, worked, suffered, won fame, and undergone amazing disasters. Roasted on a spit pretty well by the natives of Africa, baked with the sun, struck down with hunger and fever in the great desert, he had escaped from a thousand deaths. His charming lovely wife had perished in a shipwreck, and his son had been slaughtered in our last war. Yet, as soon as he saw me at Nice on the English promenade, he ran up to me and seized my hand with an air of infantile joy.

"You remember," he said to me, "the tress of Rosalie's hair? She did not give it to Pessonnaille. He stole it from a drawer. I met him last year at Rio, and he admitted it all to me."

Looking at Chéd'homme I saw his old neck, where the wrinkles formed a pattern like watered silk, jerk with joy, and his skull, smooth and bare, brown as a death's head carved in boxwood, lightened up.

THE CAB

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

WHO doesn't know the composer Janoty? Although he is as poor as Job, and his operas have as yet only been heard at a very minor theatre, this man with his colourless hair and complexion, afflicted with one of those faces that Heine called "superfluous," was a month ago loved for himself, and was the happy owner of that rarer thing than rhymes to *triumph*—a faithful wife. Now all is changed, and you shall learn how he came by his tragic fate.

Colette was an adorable little woman, forcing herself to believe in her husband's genius, keeping the house clean and nice without the aid of a servant, economising on nothing at all, fabricating delicious dishes out of chimerical ingredients, always amiable, good-tempered, and cheerful, playing Janoty's compositions on the piano as often as he liked, even a hundred times following. To make the boiled beef palatable, she provided sauces fit for an archbishop, of ideal and divine flavour, drawn solely from her own imagination. She would walk in the hot sun to the Batignolles market, where lobsters are sometimes to be bought for a halfpenny. Janoty was perfectly happy, beloved, cherished, caressed, and fed as well as a rich abbot. How did it happen then that in less than five minutes all this was changed? That is just what I'm going to tell you.

Tata, the *prima donna* of the minor theatre where Janoty's compositions were performed, had an immense success with the song, "My brother pumps, pumps, pumps," and she came to ask Janoty to write an air for her in the new piece which should be, and yet should not be, "My brother pumps, pumps, pumps." Our *maestro* had just the very talent that those sorts of compositions require. Colette opened the door to her; she was washing vegetables, and held a dish-cloth in her hand.

"Announce me," said Tata, spreading out her train, and Colette, who never gave herself airs, announced her. While Tata was putting forth all her arts to dazzle Janoty, down came one of those showers

which, during the past month, have spoiled so many hats and brought into bloom so many roses.

"Good gracious! how it's coming down," said Tata. "May I trouble you to let your maid fetch me a cab?"

There was a fine opportunity for Janoty to prove himself a courageous, or merely an honest man, and to say, "I haven't a maid, it's my wife." He was a coward, and replied, "Certainly." Then, twirling his thumbs, he went into the dining-room, which did duty for a hall, where Colette was washing her vegetables more industriously than ever, rubbing and scraping away like the worthy housewife she was. "Mademoiselle Tata," he muttered, "is wearing a satin gown and satin shoes. It is pouring cats and dogs; it would be very kind of you to go——"

"And fetch a cab?" asked Colette, giving her husband a flaming glance that ought to have made him sink into the earth. "Fetch a cab! Well, I never! Directly!"

She went, getting her only pair of boots quite wet, and even taking the coppers that Tata slipped into her hand for her trouble. And from that moment Janoty, without leaving the house, could witness every day a pantomime in five hundred tableaux, with most extraordinary transformation scenes. He made the acquaintance of iced soup and warmed-up wine, of the lamp exchanged for a guttering candle, and as he was sitting down to dinner the meal would be replaced by a piece of sausage wrapped in paper. Colette, who used to rise with the lark, could now be awakened with difficulty at eleven o'clock, and would then murmur, "Surely it's not daylight yet." The house, formerly so spotless that you would have sought a grain of dust in vain, resembled an Italian city in the hands of the Goths. There were cobwebs in the plates, and saucepans on the clock. Coats and shirts were buttonless, and stockings full of holes. And instead of performing her husband's compositions, she played nothing but Wagner.

Her irritating hands evoked the stormiest sounds; the piano was full of Tannhausers, Walkyries, Rheingolds and Götterdämmerungs, and when Janoty in despair held his head and cried, "That music gives me a fearful headache," Colette sweetly replied, "I fetched the cab." And those words formed the refrain of all their conversations. "Colette, the soup is cold." "I fetched the cab." "There are no buttons on my shirt." "I fetched the cab." "You don't love me any more; you never kiss me." "No, my dear, but I fetched the cab!"

ALEXANDRE DUMAS THE YOUNGER
1824-1895

THE HANGING AT LA PIROCHE

DO you know La Piroche ?
No ? Neither do I. So I shall not abuse my privilege as an author by giving you a description ; especially since, between you and me, they are very tiresome, those descriptions. Unless it be a question of the virgin forests of America, as in Cooper, or of the Mississippi, as in Chateaubriand, that is to say, countries that are not close at hand, and in regard to which the imagination must be assisted by those poetical voyagers who have visited them, in general descriptions are not of much consequence except to be skipped by the reader. Literature has this advantage over painting, sculpture, and music ; the threefold advantage of being able to paint by itself a picture in a single word, to carve a statue in one phrase, to mould a melody on one page ; it must not abuse itself of that privilege, and one should leave to the special arts a little of their own prerogative.

I own, then, for my part, and for lack of better advice, that when I find that I have to describe a country which does not differ from our own, I prefer to leave to my reader the pleasure of recalling it if he has seen it, or of imagining it if he does not yet know it. The reader likes well enough to be left to do his share of the work he is reading. It flatters him and makes him believe that he is capable of doing the rest. And it is an excellent thing to flatter your reader. Moreover, the whole world in reality knows what the sea is like—a plain, a forest, a blue sky, an effect of sun, an effect of the moon, or an effect of storm. Of what use to dwell upon it ? It would be far better to trace a landscape in one stroke of the brush like Rubens or Delacroix ; this should be said without comparison and keep the whole value of your palette for the figures you wish to reanimate.

When you blacken with descriptions page after page of paper, you don't give the reader an impression equal to that experienced by the most artless bourgeois who walks through the Bois de Vincennes on a soft April day, or by an unlettered girl who strolls in June, on the arm of her fiancé, at eleven o'clock at night through the shady vistas of the

woods of Romainville or the park of Enghien. We all have in our minds and hearts a gallery of landscapes made from memory, and which serves as background for all the stories of the world. There is but one word to use—day or night, winter or spring, calm or storm, wood or plain—to evoke at once a most finished landscape.

So I have only to tell you this : that at the moment when the story I am about to tell you begins it is noon, that it is May, that the highway we are going to enter is bordered on the right with furze bushes, on the left by the sea ; you know at once all that I have not told you, that is to say, that the bushes are green, that the sea is murmuring, that the sky is blue, that the sun is warm, and that there is dust on the road.

I have only to add that this highway that winds along the coast of Brittany runs from La Poterie to La Piroche ; that Piroche is a village about which I know nothing, but which must be more or less like all villages, that we are in the beginning of the fifteenth century, in 1418, and that two men, one older than the other, one the father of the other, both peasants, are following the highway mounted on two nags trotting along comfortably enough under the weight of two peasants.

“ Shall we get there in time ? ” said the son.

“ Yes, it is not to take place until two o'clock,” replied the father, “ and the sun marks but a quarter after noon.”

“ Oh, but I am curious to see that ! ”

“ I can well believe it.”

“ So he will be hanged in the armour that he stole ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ How the devil did he get the idea of stealing armour ? ”

“ It's not the idea that is hard to get——”

“ It's the armour,” interrupted the boy, who wanted his share in making a part of that joke.

“ And that, too, he didn't get.”

“ Was it fine armour ? ”

“ Splendid, they say, all shining with gold.”

“ And did they catch him as he was carrying it away ? ”

“ Yes, you know as well as I do that armour like that never goes astray without raising a great outcry ; it can't escape its proper owner all by itself.”

“ So, then, it was of iron ? ”

“ They woke up in the château at the noise they heard.”

“ And did they arrest the man ? ”

"Not at once ; they began by being afraid."

"Of course, it's always that way that people who have been robbed begin when they are in the presence of thieves ; otherwise there would be no object in being a thief."

"No, nor any pleasant excitement in being robbed ! But those brave folks had no idea that it was an affair of robbery."

"Of what, then ? "

"Of a ghost. That wretched, most vigorous fellow was carrying the armour in front of him, holding his head at the height of the loins of the armour so effectively that he acquired gigantic proportions in the corridor where he passed. Add to this a clattering noise which the rascal made behind him, and you will appreciate the fright of the valets. But, unfortunately for him, he woke up the Seigneur of La Piroche, he who has fear of neither the dead nor the living, who easily, and all by himself, arrested the thief and handed him over, bound, to his well-deserved justice."

"And his well-deserved justice ? "

"The condemned man is to be hanged clothed in the armour."

"Why that clause in the sentence ? "

"Because the Seigneur of La Piroche is not only a brave captain, but a man of common sense and of spirit, who wished to draw from this just condemnation an example for others and an advantage for himself. Why, don't you know that whatever touches a hanged man becomes a talisman for him who possesses it ? So the Seigneur of La Piroche has ordered that the thief should be hanged dressed in his armour, so as to reclaim it when the man is dead and have a talisman to wear during our next wars."

"That is very ingenious."

"I should think so."

"Let's make haste, for I am so anxious to see the poor man hanged."

"We have plenty of time ! We must not wear our beasts out. We are not going to stop at La Piroche ; we will have to go on a league farther, and then return to La Poterie."

"Yes, but our beasts will rest for five or six hours, for we do not return until evening."

The father and son continued on their way, talking, and half an hour later they reached La Piroche.

As the father had said, they arrived in time. Have fathers always the privilege of being right ?

There was an immense concourse of people on the great square in front of the château, for it was there that the scaffold had been erected, a splendid gallows, in faith, of sound oak, not very high, it is true, since it was intended for a wretched, obscure criminal, but high enough, nevertheless, for death to do its work between earth and the end of the rope which was swinging in the fresh sea breeze like an eel hanging by its tail.

The condemned man was certain of having a beautiful view at the moment of death, for he was to die with his face turned toward the ocean. If this view could be any consolation to him, so much the better, but, for my part, I doubt it.

And all the while the sea was blue, and from time to time between the azure of the sky and that of the sea floated a white cloud, like an angel on its way to heaven, but whose long robes still trailed upon the earth it was quitting.

The two companions approached as near as possible to the scaffold, so as to miss nothing that was going on, and, like all the rest, they waited, having this advantage over the others, that they were mounted on two nags and could see better with less fatigue.

They had not long to wait.

At a quarter of two the gates of the château opened, and the condemned man appeared, preceded by the guards of the Seigneur of La Piroche and followed by the executioner.

The thief was dressed in the stolen armour and was mounted reversed on the bare back of a jackass. He rode with vizor down and head lowered. They had tied his hands behind him, and if they wish for our opinion in the matter we have no hesitation in saying that, judging by his position, in default of his face, which could not be seen, he ought to have been very ill at ease, and indulging at that moment in very sad reflections.

They conducted him to the side of the scaffold, and a moving picture hardly pleasant for him began to silhouette itself against the blue sky. The hangman set his ladder against the scaffold, and the chaplain of the Seigneur of La Piroche, mounted on a prepared platform, delivered the sentence of justice.

The condemned man did not move. One might have said that he had given the spectators the slip by dying before he was hanged.

They called to him to descend from his ass and deliver himself to the hangman.

He did not move. We understand his hesitation.

Then the hangman took him by the elbows, lifted him off the ass, and set him upright on the ground.

Fine fellow, that hangman !

When we say that he set him upright, we do not lie. But we would lie in saying that he remained as they placed him. He had in two minutes jumped two-thirds of the alphabet ; that is to say, in vulgar parlance, that instead of standing straight like an I, he became zigzag like a Z.

During this time the chaplain finished reading the sentence.

" Have you any request to make ? " he asked of the culprit.

" Yes," replied the unfortunate, in a voice sad and low.

" What do you ask ? "

" I ask for pardon."

I do not know if the word " joker " was invented in those days, but then or never was the time to invent it and to speak it.

The Seigneur of La Piroche shrugged his shoulders and ordered the executioner to do his duty.

The latter made ready to mount the ladder leaning against the gibbet, which, impassive, was about to draw with extended arm the soul out of a body, and he attempted to make the condemned mount in front of him, but it was not an easy thing to do. One does not know, in general, what obstacles those condemned to death will put in the way of their dying.

The hangman and the man there had the air of passing civilities one to another. It was a question of who should go first.

The hangman, to make him mount on his ladder, returned to the method he employed in making him descend from his ass. He seized him around the middle of his body, balanced him on the third rung of the ladder, and began to push him up from beneath.

" Bravo ! " cried the crowd.

He ought to have mounted well.

Then the executioner adroitly slipped the running noose, which adorned the end of the rope, around the neck of the culprit, and, giving the latter a vigorous kick in the back, he flung him out into space, which strongly resembled Eternity.

An immense clamour greeted this looked-for dénouement, and a shudder passed through the crowd. Whatever may be the crime he has committed, the man who dies is always at the moment greater than those who watch him die.

The hanged man swung for three or four minutes at the end of his rope, as he had a right to do, danced, wriggled, then hung motionless and rigid.

The Z had become an I again.

They gazed a while longer on the culprit, whose gilded armour glistened in the sun, then the spectators divided themselves, little by little, into groups, and went their way home, chatting about the event.

"Pooh! a horrid thing is death!" said the son of the peasant, as he continued his journey with his father.

"In good faith, to hang one for not having succeeded in stealing a piece of armour, that's expensive. What do you think?"

"I wonder, I do, what they would have done to him if he had really stolen the armour?"

"They would not have done anything to him, for if he had really stolen the armour he would have been able to escape from the château. Then, possibly, he would not have returned to be arrested."

"Yet he is punished more for a crime that he has not committed than he would have been if he had committed the crime!"

"But he had the intention of committing it."

"And the intention was accounted as a fact——"

"That is perfectly just."

"But it isn't pretty to look at."

And since they found themselves on rising ground, the two companions turned to contemplate for the last time the silhouette of the unfortunate.

Twenty minutes later they entered the little town where they were to receive certain moneys, and which they were to leave that evening in order to accomplish the return home that same night.

On the morrow, at break of day, the guards sallied out from the château of La Piroche for the purpose of taking down the corpse of the hanging man, from which they intended to recover the armour of the Seigneur, but they discovered something which they had been far from anticipating, that is to say, the gibbet was there, as always, but the hanged man was not there.

The two guards rubbed their eyes, believing themselves to be dreaming, but the thing was very real. No more hanged man, and naturally no more armour.

And what was extraordinary, the rope was neither broken nor cut, but just in the condition it was before receiving the condemned.

The two guards ran to announce this news to the Seigneur of La Piroche. He was not willing to believe it, and proceeded to assure himself of the truth of the facts. So puissant a lord was he that he was convinced the hanged man would reappear for him there ; but he saw what all the rest had seen.

What had become of the dead ? For the condemned had certainly died the day before, before the eyes of the whole village.

Had another thief profited by the night to get possession of the armour that covered the corpse ?

Possibly—but in taking the armour he would naturally leave the corpse, for which he had no use.

Had the friends or relations of the culprit wished to give him Christian burial ?

Nothing impossible in that if it were not for the fact that the culprit had neither friends nor relations, and that people who had had religious sentiments like that would have taken the culprit and left the armour. That, then, was no longer to be thought of. What should one believe, then ?

The Seigneur of La Piroche was in despair. He was all for his armour. He made promise of a reward of ten gold crowns to any one who should deliver to him the thief, dressed as he was in dying.

They ransacked the houses ; they found nothing.

No one presented himself.

They caused a wise man of the town of Rennes to be sent for, and they propounded this question to him :

“ In what way does a dead man who has been hanged manage to free himself from the rope that holds him in the air by the neck ? ”

The wise man demanded eight days to ponder over the question, at the termination of which he replied :

“ He cannot do it.”

Then they propounded this second question :

“ A thief, unsuccessful in stealing while alive, and having been condemned to death for stealing, can he steal after his death ? ”

The wise man replied :

“ Yes.”

He was asked how it could be done. He replied that he knew nothing about it.

He was the greatest sage of his time.

They sent him home and contented themselves with believing, for those were the days of witchcraft, that the thief was a wizard.

Then they said masses to exorcise that evil spirit, which was without doubt taking his revenge upon the Seigneur who had ordered his death and upon those who had come to see him die.

A month passed in fruitless search.

The gibbet still stood there as always, humiliated, gloomy, and discredited. Never had a gibbet committed such a breach of confidence.

The Seigneur of La Piroche continued to clamour for his armour from man, God, and the devil.

Nothing.

At last he was beginning, without a doubt, to make the best of this strange event, and of the loss which had been the result, when one morning, as he was waking, he heard a great commotion on the square where the execution had taken place. He was making ready to inform himself of what was passing when his chaplain entered the room.

"Monseigneur," said he, "do you know what has happened?"

"No, but I am going to ask."

"I can tell you, I can."

"What is it, then?"

"A miracle from heaven!"

"Really!"

"The hanged man——"

"Well?"

"He is there!"

"Where?"

"On the scaffold."

"Hanging?"

"Yes, Monseigneur."

"In his armour?"

"In your armour."

"True, for it is mine. And is he dead?"

"Absolutely dead—only——"

"Only what?"

"Did he have spurs on when they hanged him?"

"No."

"Well, Monseigneur, he has them, and in place of having the

casque on his head, he has placed it with great care at the foot of the gibbet, and left his head hanging uncovered."

"Let us see, Mr. Chaplain, let us see, straight off!"

The Seigneur of La Piroche ran to the square crowded with the curious. The neck of the hanged man had passed again into the running noose, the corpse was there at the end of the rope, and the armour was there on the corpse.

It was astounding. So they proclaimed it a miracle.

"He has repented," said one, "and has come to hang himself over again."

"He has been there all the time," said another; "only we did not see him."

"But why has he got spurs?" asked a third.

"No doubt, because he has come from afar and wished to return in a hurry."

"I know well, for my part, that far or near, I would not have needed to put on spurs, for I would not have come back."

And they laughed, and they stared at the ugly face the dead man made.

As for the Seigneur of La Piroche, he thought of nothing but of making sure that the thief was quite dead, and of securing his armour.

They cut down the corpse and stripped it; then, once despoiled, they hung it up again, and the ravens investigated so thoroughly that at the end of two days it was all jagged, at the end of eight days it had only the appearance of a rag, and at the end of fifteen days it had no longer the appearance of anything at all; or, if it did resemble anything, it was only those impossible hanged men we used to make pictures of on the first page of our text-book, and below which we would write:

Behold Pierrot suspended,
Who has not his Latin rendered.
But 'twas otherwisely fated:
Pierrot was the one translated.

But what had the hanged man been doing during his month of absence? How did it happen that he escaped, and, having escaped, that he hanged himself again?

We will give below the three versions which have been presented to us.

A magician, a pupil of Merlin, declared that if at the moment of dying the culprit has had the will to disappear and the ability to absorb

his body into his will, the will being an immaterial thing, invisible, and impalpable, the body, which finds itself absorbed by it, and consequently hidden in it, becomes by that means also impalpable, immaterial, and invisible, and that if the body of a thief has reappeared at the end of a month, and at the end of a rope, it is because at that supreme moment his will, troubled by his conscience, has not had sufficient force for eternal absorption.

This may not be a good version, but it is one.

The theologians affirm that the culprit did succeed in vanishing, but that, pursued by remorse and being in haste to reconcile himself with God, he could not endure the life longer than one month, and, full of repentance, came to execute upon himself that justice which he had escaped the first time.

That, perhaps, is not the true version, but it is always Christian logic, and as a Christian we will not dismiss it altogether.

Finally, they declared that our two peasants in returning home that evening, and passing close to the gibbet, heard lamentations, a rattling, and something like a prayer ; that they piously crossed themselves and demanded what was the matter ; that they received no reply, but the lamentations continued, and it seemed to them that they came from the corpse that was above their heads. Then they took the ladder that the hangman had left at the foot of the scaffold, rested it against the arm of the gibbet, and the son, having mounted to the level of the condemned, said to him :

“ Is it you who are making these complaints, poor man ? ”

The condemned gathered all his strength together and said :

“ Yes.”

“ Then you are still alive ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ You repent of your crime ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Then I will loosen you, and since the Evangelist commands us to give succour to those who suffer, and that you suffer, I am going to succour you and bring you to life in order to bring you to good. God prefers a soul that repents to a corpse that expiates.”

Then the father and the son cut down the dying man, and saw how it was that he still lived. The rope, instead of tightening about the neck of the thief, had tightened at the base of the casque so effectually that the culprit was suspended but not strangled, and, occupying with

his head a kind of vantage-point in the interior of the casque, he was able to breathe and to keep alive up to the time our two companions passed by.

The latter took him down and carried him home with them, where they gave him into the care of the mother and the young daughter.

But he who has stolen will steal.

There were but two things to steal at the peasant's, for the money he had brought back with him was not in his house. These two things were his horse and his daughter, a fair-haired girl of sixteen.

The ex-hanged decided to steal both the one and the other, for he was covetous of the horse and had fallen in love with the daughter.

So one night he saddled the horse, buckled on the spurs to make him ride faster, and went to take the young girl while she was asleep, and lift her up on to the crupper.

But the girl awoke and cried out.

The father and the son came running up. The thief tried to escape, but he was too late. The young girl told about the attempt of the hanged man ; and the father and the son, seeing well that no repentance was to be expected from such a man, resolved to execute justice upon him, but more effectually than the Seigneur of La Piroche had allowed himself to do it. They bound the thief to the horse which he had saddled himself, led him to the square of La Piroche, and strung him up there where he had been hanged, but placed his casque on the ground to make sure that he should not vanish again ; then they returned home quietly.

There is the third version. I do not know why I believe it to be the most probable, and that you would do well, like me, to give it preference over the other two.

As for the Seigneur of La Piroche, as soon as he had secured a real talisman, he went happily off to the wars, where he was the first to be killed.

ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

1822-1899

MY INHERITANCE

AT the death of my worthy uncle, Christian Haas, mayor of Lauterbach, I was already music conductor to the Grand Duke Yeri Peter, and I had fifteen hundred florins as salary. That did not prevent me from being in very low water. Uncle Christian, well aware of my position, never sent me a penny, so I cannot help shedding a few tears in learning his posthumous generosity. I inherited from him, alas ! . . . two hundred and fifty acres of good plough-land, vineyards, orchards, a bit of forest, and his fine mansion of Lauterbach.

“ Dear uncle,” I said to myself with much feeling, “ now I see the extent of your wisdom, and glorify you for keeping your purse-strings tied up. If you had sent me any money, where would it be now ? In the hands of the Philistines ! Little Kate Fresserine alone could have given any news about it. But now, by your caution, you have saved the situation. All honour to you, dear Uncle Christian ! . . . All honour to you ! ”

And having said all this and much more, not less touching or less sincere, I set off on horseback for Lauterbach. It was very odd ! The demon of avarice, with whom I never had any dealings, almost made himself master of my soul.

“ Kasper,” he whispered in my ear, “ now you’re a rich man. Up to the present you have only pursued vain phantoms. Love and pleasure and the arts are only smoke. A man must be mad to think anything of glory. There is no solidity about anything except lands, houses, and money out on first mortgages. Give up your illusions ! Push forward your fences, widen your fields, heap up your money, and you will be honoured and respected. You will become mayor like your uncle, and the people, when you approach, will take off their hats a mile away, saying, “ Here comes Herr Kasper Haas . . . the rich man . . . the warmest gentleman in the country ! ”

These ideas came and went in my head like figures from a magic

lantern, and I found they had a reasonable, serious look, and I was much taken with them.

It was in mid-July. In the heaven the lark poured out his unending music ; the crops undulated in the plain ; the warm puffs of light wind carried to me the love-cries of the quail and the partridge in the corn ; the foliage twinkled in the sunlight ; the Lauter murmured in the shadow of the large old willows. But I saw or heard nothing of all that. I wished to be the mayor ; I stuck out my abdomen ; I puffed out my cheeks, and I repeated to myself, " Here comes Herr Kasper Haas . . . the rich man . . . the warmest gentleman in the country ! Ho ! Ho ! Ho ! "

And my little mare galloped on. I was anxious to try on the three-cornered hat and the great red waistcoat of my Uncle Christian, for I thought that if they suited me it would save me buying others. About four in the afternoon the little village of Lauterbach appeared, nestling in the valley ; and it was with some emotion that I looked at the large fine mansion which was to be my residence, the centre of my estate and my power. I admired its picturesque situation on the dusty highway, the immense roof of grey tile, the sheds with their vast wings brooding over carts and wagons and crops, with a farm-yard behind, then the kitchen garden, the orchard, the vineyards on the hill slope, the meadows in the distance. I thrilled with pleasure at the spectacle.

And as I went down the main road of the village, old women, with nose and chin meeting like nut-crackers, bare-headed, rumpled children, men in big otter-skin hats, a pipe with a silver chain in their mouths—all these good folks looked at me and greeted me :

" Good day, Herr Kasper ! Good day, Herr Haas ! "

And all the little windows fill with astonished faces. I already feel at home. It seems to me I have always been a great landowner of Lauterbach. My life as a musical conductor is no more than a dream—my enthusiasm for music a folly of youth. How money does alter a man's way of looking at things !

However, I stopped before the house of Notary Becker. He has the deeds of my property, and must give them to me. Tying my horse to the ring by the door, I jumped on the step, and the old lawyer, his bald head uncovered, his thin spine clad in a long green dressing-gown with a flower pattern, came out to welcome me.

" Herr Kasper Haas ! I have much honour in greeting you ! "

" Your servant, Master Becker ! "

" Will you deign to enter, Herr Haas ? "

" After you, Master Becker, after you."

We crossed the hall, and I saw at the end a little bright airy room, a well-set out table, and, near the table, a pretty girl, graceful and sweet, her cheeks touched with a modest blush.

" Herr Kasper Haas ! " said the venerable notary.

I bowed.

" My daughter Lothe ! " added the worthy man.

While I was feeling my old artistic inclinations revive within me, and admiring the little nose, the scarlet lips, and large blue eyes of Fräulein Lothe, her slender waist, and her little dimpled plump hands, Master Becker invited me to take my place at the table, saying that, as he knew I was about to arrive, he had had a little meal prepared for me.

So we sat down and talked about the beauties of nature. I thought of the old father, and began to calculate what a notary would earn in Lauterbach.

" Fräulein, may I have the pleasure of helping you to the wing of a chicken ? "

" Sir, you are very good. With pleasure."

Lothe lowered her eyes. I filled her glass, and she moistened her red lips with the wine. Father was joyful, and talked about hunting and fishing.

" You will no doubt take up the pleasures of a country life. Our rabbit warrens are splendid, and the streams are full of trout. There is some fine hunting in the forest, and in the evening there is good company at the tavern. The inspector of woods and waters is a charming young man, and the magistrate is an excellent hand at whist."

I listened, and thought this calm and peaceful sort of life was delicious. Fräulein Lothe seemed to me charming. She talked little, but her smile was so sweet and frank that she must be very loving, I fancied.

At last the coffee and the liqueur arrived. The young lady retired, and the old lawyer got on to serious business affairs. He spoke to me of my uncle's estate, and I listened very attentively. No will, no legacies, and no mortgage! Everything clear, straightforward, regular! " Happy Kasper ! " I said to myself. " Happy Kasper."

Then we entered the study to deal with the title-deeds. The close-

ness of the air, the piles of documents, the rows of law books, quickly chased away the day-dreams of my amorous fantasies. I sat down in a big arm-chair, and Master Becker thoughtfully fixed his horn spectacles on his long curved nose.

"Here are the title-deeds to your Eichmatt meadowlands, a hundred acres of the best soil in the parish, and splendidly watered. Three crops of hay in a year. It will bring you in four thousand francs. Here are the deeds for your Grünerwald farms, and those for your Lauterbach mansion. It is by far the largest in the village, dating from the sixteenth century."

"The devil! Master Becker, that is nothing in its favour."

"On the contrary. It is in a perfect state of repair. It was built by Hans Burckart, the Count of Barth, as his hunting-house. It is true, a good many generations have passed since then, but the upkeep and repair have never been neglected."

With more explanations, Master Becker handed me the title-deeds of my other properties; and having put the parchments in a bag lent to me by the worthy man, I took leave of him, more convinced than ever of my new importance. Arriving at my mansion, I inserted the key in the lock, and kicking the step, I cried, "This is mine!" I entered the hall, "This is mine!" I opened the wardrobes, and seeing the linen piled to the top, "This is mine!" I mounted to the first floor, repeating always like a madman, "This is mine! This is mine! Yes, I am the owner!"

All my cares for the future, all my fears for the morrow are dissipated. I figure in the world, no longer by the feeble merit men allow me, by the caprice of the fashion of the day, but by the possession of things that everybody covets. Oh, poets! . . . Oh, artists! . . . what are you beside this stout owner of land, who nourishes you by the crumbs from his table? You are only the ornament of his banquet . . . the distraction of his moods of boredom . . . the songbird on his hedgerow . . . the statue decorating his garden. . . . You exist only by him and through him. . . . Why should you envy him the fumes of pride and vanity . . . he who owns the only realities in this world!

If in this moment the poor Musical Conductor Haas had appeared before me, I should have looked at him over the shoulder, and asked myself, "Who is this fool? What has he in common with me?"

I opened the window. Night was falling. The setting sun gilded my orchards, my vineyards that lost themselves in the distance. On

the summit of the hill a few white stones indicated the cemetery. I turned round. A vast Gothic hall, the ceiling adorned with heavy mouldings, took my eye. I was in the hunting-lodge of Hans Burckart, the Count of Barth. An antique spinet was placed between two of the windows. I passed my fingers over the keys absent-mindedly. The slack wires knocked together with the strange, twangling, ironic voice of toothless old women humming over the melodies of their youth.

At the end of the hall was the half-vaulted alcove, with great red curtains and a four-poster bed. The sight reminded me that I had been six hours in the saddle. And, undressing with a smile of unspeakable satisfaction, "This is the first time," I said, "I have slept in my own bed." And lying down, my eyes bent on the immense plain, already bathed in shadows, I felt my eyelids grow heavy in pleasant fashion. Not a leaf murmured; the noises of the village died one by one away . . . the sun had sunk . . . some golden gleams marked his trail in infinite space. . . . I soon fell asleep.

It was night, and the moon shone in all her glory when I awoke with no apparent cause. The vague fragrances of summer came through the window to me. The air was filled with the sweet scent of the new hay. I stared around in surprise, for when I tried to get up to close the window, by some inconceivable thing, my body slept on, heavy as lead, while my head was perfectly free. With all my efforts to rise, not a muscle responded. I felt my arms by my side completely inert . . . my legs were stretched out, motionless; my head moved in vain. The deep, cadenced breathing of my body frightened me . . . my head fell back on the pillow, exhausted by its efforts. "Am I paralysed in my limbs?" I asked myself. "Kasper Haas, the master of so many vineyards and fat pasturages, cannot even move this clod of clay that he really owns? O God! . . . What does it mean?"

And as I was thinking in this melancholy way, a slight sound attracted my attention. The door of my alcove opened; a man dressed in some stiff stuff like felt, as the monks of Saint Gualber in Mayence are . . . a large grey felt hat with a hawk's plume in it . . . his hands buried to the elbow in hide gloves . . . entered the hall. His bell-shaped boots came above his knees; a heavy gold chain, charged with decorations, hung from his neck. His tanned, bony face, with hollow eyes, wore a look of keen sadness, and there were horrible greenish tints on it.

He walked the hall with hard, firm step, like the tick-tack of a

clock ; and with his hand on the guard of an immense sword, striking the floor with his heel, he cried, " This is mine ! . . . Mine. . . . Hans Burckárt. . . . Count of Barth ! "

It was like an old rusty machine grinding out necromantic words. It made my flesh creep. But at the same time the door at the other end opened, and the Count of Barth disappeared through it. I heard his automatic step descend a stair that never seemed to come to an end. The sound of his footfall on each step grew fainter and fainter, as though he were descending to the fiery depths of the earth.

As I still listened, hearing nothing, lo ! suddenly the great hall was filled with many people. The spinet sounded . . . they danced . . . they sang . . . made love and drank good wine. I saw against the blue background of the moon, young ladies loll round the spinet ; their cavaliers, clad in fabulous lace, and numberless knick-knacks, sat with crossed legs on gold-fringed stools, leaning forward, tossing their heads, waddling about, making themselves pleasant. The little withered fingers of an old lady, with a nose like a parrot's beak, clicked on the keys of the spinet ; bursts of thin laughter rocketed left and right, ending in a mad rattle that made the hairs stand up in my neck.

All this society of folly and grace and fine manners exhaled a smell of rose water and mignonette soured by old age. I made again some superhuman efforts to get rid of this nightmare. Impossible ! But at the same moment one of the young ladies said :

" Gentlemen, make yourselves at home. . . . This domain——"

She did not have the time to finish. A silence of death followed her words. I looked around. The phantasmagoria had disappeared.

Then the sound of a horn struck my ears. Outside, horses were prancing, dogs barking, and the moon, calm, contemplative, shone into my alcove. The door opened, as by a wind, and fifty hunters, followed by young ladies, two hundred years old, with long trailing gowns, filed majestically from one hall to the other. Four serfs also passed, bearing on their stout shoulders a stretcher of oak branches, on which rested—bleeding, frothy at the mouth, with glazed eyes—an enormous wild boar. I heard the sound of the horn still louder outside. Then it died away in the woodlands like the sleepy cry of a bird . . . and then . . . nothing !

As I was thinking of this strange vision, I looked by chance in the

silent shadows, and was astonished to see the hall occupied by one of those old Protestant families of bygone days, calm, dignified, and solemn in their manners. There was the white-haired father, reading a big Bible ; the old mother, tall and pale, spinning the household linen, straight as a spindle, with a collar up to her ears, her waist bound by fillets of black ratteen ; then the chubby children with dreaming eyes leaning on the table in deep silence ; the old sheep dog, listening to his master ; the old clock in its walnut case, counting the seconds ; and farther away, in the shadow, the faces of girls and the features of lads in drugget jackets and felt hats, discussing the story of Jacob and Rachel by way of declaring their love.

And this worthy family seemed to be convinced of the holy truths ; the old father, with his cracked voice, continued the edifying story with deep emotion :

“ This is your promised land . . . the land of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob . . . which I have designed for you from the beginning of the world . . . so that you shall grow and multiply there like the stars of the sky. And none shall take it from you . . . for you are my beloved people, in whom I have put my trust.”

The moon, clouded for a few moments, grew clear again, and hearing nothing more I turned my head. The calm cold rays lighted up the empty hall ; not a figure, not a shadow. . . . The light streamed on the floor, and, in the distance, some trees lifted their foliage, sharp and clear, against the luminous hillside.

But suddenly the high walls were hidden in books. The old spinet gave way to the desk of a learned man, whose big wig showed to me above an arm-chair of red leather. I heard the goose-quill scratching the paper. The writer, lost in thought, did not stir. The silence overwhelmed me. But great was my surprise when the man turned in his chair, and I recognised in him the original of the portrait of the Jurist Gregorius that is No. 253 in the Hesse-Darmstadt Picture Gallery. Heavens ! how did this great person descend from his frame ? That is what I was asking myself when in a hollow voice he cried, “ Ownership, in civil law, is the right to use and abuse so far as the law of nature allows.” As this formula came from his lips, his figure grew dimmer and dimmer. At the last word he could not be seen.

What more shall I tell you, my dear friends ? During the following hours I saw twenty other generations succeed each other in the ancient

castle of Hans Burckart. . . . Christians and Jews, lords and commoners, ignorant people and learned, artists and philistines, and all of them claimed the place as their legitimate property. All thought themselves the sovereign masters of the property. Alas! the wind of death blew them out of the door. I ended by becoming accustomed to this strange procession. Each time one of these worthy persons cried, "This is mine!" I laughed and murmured, "Wait, my friend, wait, you will vanish like the rest."

I was weary when, far away, very far away, a cock crowed, and with his piercing voice awoke the sleeping world. The leaves shook in the morning wind, and a shudder ran through my body. I felt my limbs were at last free, and rising on my elbow I gazed with rapture over the silent countryside. . . . But what I saw was scarcely calculated to make me rejoice. All along the little hill-path that led to the graveyard climbed the procession of phantoms that had visited me in the night. Step by step they advanced to the lichen gate, and in their silent march, under the vague grey shadowy tints of the rising dawn, there was something terrible. As I looked, more dead than alive, my mouth gaping, my forehead bathed in a cold sweat, the leaders of the procession seemed to melt into the old weeping willows. There remained only a little number of spectres. And I was beginning to recover my breath, when my uncle Christian, the last figure in the procession, turned round under the old gate, and motioned to me to come with him. A voice, far away . . . ironical, cried:

"Kasper. . . . Kasper. . . . Come. . . . This land is ours!"

Then everything disappeared, and a purple line, stretching across the horizon, announced the dawn. I need not tell you that I did not accept the invitation of Master Christian Haas. It will be necessary for some one more powerful than he to force me to take that road. But I must admit that my night in the castle of Burckart has singularly altered the good opinion I had conceived of my own importance. For the strange vision seemed to me to signify that if the land, the orchards, the meadows do not pass away, the owners vanish very quickly. It makes the hair rise on your head when you think on it seriously.

So, far from letting myself slumber in the delight of an idle country life, I took up music again, and I hope next year to have an opera produced in Berlin. The fact is that glory, which common-sense people regard as moonshine, is still the most solid of all forms of owner-

ship. It does not end with life. On the contrary, death confirms it, and gives it a new lustre. Suppose, for example, that Homer returned to this world. No one would think of denying him the merit of having written the *Iliad*, and each of us would hasten to render to this great man the honours due to him. But if by chance the richest landowner of his age returned to claim the fields, the forests, the pasturages, which were the pride of his life, it is ten to one he would be treated as a thief, and perish miserably under the blows of the Turks.

UNCLE BERNARD'S SHELL

ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

UNCLE BERNARD had a large shell on his chest of drawers. A shell with rosy edges is not common in the forest of Hunds-ruck, at a hundred and fifty leagues from the sea ; Daniel Richter, an old soldier of the Empire, had brought this from the ocean as an eternal memorial of his voyages.

You can imagine with what admiration we village children contemplated this wonderful object. Each time that Uncle went out on his round of visits, we entered the library—cotton caps on the back of our heads, hands in the slits of our blue blouses, noses against the slab of marble, we stared at the “ American snail,” as it was called by the old servant Gredel.

Ludwig said it must have lived in the hedges ; Kasper held it swam in the rivers ; but none of us knew really what the facts of the case were. Now, one day Uncle Bernard, finding us disputing as usual, began to smile. He put his three-cornered hat on the table, took the shell between his hands, and sitting in an arm-chair, said :

“ Listen to what is going on inside there ! ”

Each of us applied his ear to the shell, and we heard a great noise, a complaint, a murmur, like a gust of wind far away in the depths of the wood. And all of us stared at each other wonder-struck.

“ What do you think of that ? ” said Uncle ; but none of us knew what to reply.

Then he said to us in a grave voice :

“ Children, this big voice that murmurs there is the noise of your blood flowing in your head, in your arms, in your heart, in all your limbs. Here it runs like a little fountain, there like a torrent, there like brooks and great streams. It bathes all your body inside, so that everything there can live and prosper and grow larger, from the tip of your hairs to the sole of your feet. You know the echo of the Hollow Rock that sends you back your shout when you cry, your song when you sing, and the sound of your horn when you lead your goats from the Altenberg at evening ? Well, this shell is an echo similar to

that of the Hollow Rock. Only, when you bring it close to your ear, it is the noise of what is passing within you that it gives back, and this noise resembles all the voices of the sky and the earth ; for each of us is a little world. If a man could see a hundredth part of the marvels that take place in his head in a single second, to make him live and think, and of which he only hears the murmur in the depth of the shell, he would fall on his knees and weep a long time, thanking God for His infinite goodness.

" Later, when you are men, you will understand my words better, and recognise that I am right. In the meantime, my dear friends, watch over your souls, keep them without stain, for it is by the soul that you live. The Lord has put it in your little world to light it up, as He has put the sun in the sky to illumine and warm the universe. Avoid idleness, gluttony, disobedience and lies. All these ugly things are like clouds that rise from below and end by darkening the light that the Lord has given you. If you keep your soul above these clouds, it will shine always like a clear sun and you will be happy ! "

Thus spoke Uncle Bernard, and each of us listened and resolved to follow his good advice, and not allow the vapours from below to overcloud his soul.

How often since have I not leant my ear to the humming of the marvellous shell ! Every evening, in the fine autumn weather, in returning from the pastures, I took it on my knees, and with my cheek against its rosy enamel I listened in deep thought. I pictured to myself the wonders that Uncle Bernard had told us, thinking, " If we could see those things through a little hole, it would be splendid ! "

But what astonished me more than all the rest was that, through continually listening, I seemed to be able to distinguish, amid the humming of the shell, the echo of all my thoughts. Some sweet and tender, others joyful ; they sang like tits and blackcaps at the return of springtime, and that delighted me. I would have remained there for hours, my mouth half open, my eyes staring, scarcely breathing in order to hear better, if our old Gredel had not shouted to me, " Fritz, what are you thinking about ? Take that shell away from your ear for a little while, and put on the table-cloth. For here is the doctor coming back ! "

Then I placed the shell on the drawers with a sigh, and laid the cloth for myself and my uncle at the end of the table, and, taking the large decanter, fetched some water from the well.

One day, however, the shell of Uncle Bernard gave me back less agreeable sounds ; its music became severe, and put me in the greatest fright. It was because I had no reason to be satisfied with myself ; dark clouds covered my soul ; I had done wrong, very great wrong. But I must tell you that from the beginning. This is how it all happened. Ludwig and I, in the afternoon, were looking after our goats on the plateau of the Altenberg. We platted the cord of our whips, we whistled and thought of nothing. The goats climbed to the top of the rock, their necks outstretched, their beards standing out against the blue sky. Our old dog, Bockel, quite toothless, slumbered, with his long wolfish head between his paws. We were lying in the shadow of a clump of small firs, when suddenly Ludwig stretched his whip towards the ravine, and said to me, " Look down there, at the edge of the big rock, on the old beech tree ; there is a nest of blackbirds."

Then I saw the old blackbird darting from branch to branch, because he knew we were looking at him. A thousand times Uncle Bernard had forbidden me to rob birds' nests ; and, moreover, the nest was above the precipice, in the fork of a big mouldering branch. For a long time I looked at it all, musing. Ludwig said to me, " There are young ones. While I was gathering blackberries in the brambles this morning, I heard them chirping for food. To-morrow they will fly away, for they must be feathered."

I still said nothing, but the devil pushed me on. I rose up and went to the tree, in the midst of the heather, and tried to clasp it round. It was too big. Unhappily, close by grew a smaller tree all green. I climbed on it, and, making it bend over, I reached the first branch of the big beech. I mounted up. The two blackbirds circled about the foliage with plaintive cries. I paid no attention to them, and got astride the mouldering bough leading to the nest, which I could see very well. In it were three nestlings and an egg, and that made me feel plucky. The little ones stretched out their necks, and opened their large yellow beaks to the bottom of their throats, and I was sure of getting them. But, as I went forward, my legs hanging down and my hands clutching in front, suddenly the bough broke clean off and I had only the time to cry, " Oh, my God ! "

I made two turns through the air, and fell on a big bough below, to which I clung with all my strength. The tree trembled to the roots, and the upper branch went down, dragging the rocks with it with a noise that made the hairs of my head stand on end. In spite of myself

I looked at it descending the ravine. It splashed into the torrent, and went spinning away in the foam towards the big whirlpool, where it disappeared. Then I carefully climbed up the trunk, my knees well pressed together, and I let myself slide, trembling and sick, into the heather. The two old blackbirds still hovered above me with mournful cries. Ludwig had run away ; but as he was going down the path from the Altenberg, he chanced to turn his head, and seeing me safe and sound came back, shouting breathlessly, "There you are ! You didn't fall from the rocks ? "

" Yes," I answered, almost unable to move my tongue. " Here I am. . . . The good Lord has saved me. . . . But let us go away. . . . Go away. . . . I am afraid ! "

It was about seven in the evening, the red sun was setting between the pines. I had enough that day of looking after goats. The dog drove along our flock that took the dusty path down to Hirschland. Neither Ludwig nor I blew joyfully in our horn, as on other evenings, to get an answer from the echo of Hollow Rock. Fear was upon us, and my legs were still trembling. Reaching the village, where the goats went to left and right bleating at all the doors of the stables, I said to Ludwig :

" You will not say anything ? "

" No. Be easy about it."

And I went home to Uncle Bernard. He had gone on the mountains to see an old, sick wood-man. Gredel prepared the table. When Uncle did not return by eight o'clock, we supped alone. We did this as usual. Then Gredel took the plates away and washed up in the kitchen, and I entered the library, and took up the shell, not without anxiety. God in heaven, how it murmured ! I heard the torrents and the rivers roaring, and in the midst of it all the sorrowful cries of the old blackbirds, the noise of the falling branch dragging down the rocks, and the shivering of the old rocking beech tree. And as I pictured to myself the poor little nestlings crushed on a stone ! . . . it was terrible . . . terrible ! I ran into my little bedroom above the barn and got into bed. But I could not sleep. Fear was still upon me.

About ten o'clock I heard Uncle trot up in the silence of the night. He stopped at our door, led his horse to the stable, and then entered. I heard him open the kitchen cupboard and take a snack, as was his custom when he came back late.

" If he knew what I had done ! " I said to myself. At last he went

to bed. In vain I turned from one side to the other. I was too agitated to sleep. It seemed to me that my soul was as black as ink, and I wanted to cry. At midnight my despair became so great that I preferred to confess everything. Rising up, I went down in my shirt to Uncle's bedroom, who was sleeping with a night light on the table. I knelt down by his bed. He woke up with a start, and raising himself on his elbow, looked at me in astonishment.

"Fritzel!" he said. "What is the matter, my child?"

"Uncle Bernard," I sobbed, "pardon me, I have committed a great sin."

"What have you done?" he said tenderly.

"I climbed on a beech on the Altenberg to rob a blackbird's nest, and the bough broke."

"Broke? Oh, my God!"

"Yes, but the Lord saved me by allowing me to get caught on a lower branch. Now the old blackbirds keep asking me for their little ones. They fly around me, and will not let me sleep."

My uncle remained silent for some time. I wept passionately.

"Uncle," I said again, "this evening I listened in the shell. Everything is broken, everything is upset. It can never be put right."

Then he took me in his arms, and said in a grave voice:

"I pardon you, my boy! Now be calm. But let it serve as a lesson to you. Think how sad I should have been if you had been brought back dead! Well, the poor father and the poor mother of the little blackbirds are as sad as I should have been myself. You did not think of that. And now that you are sorry, we must all pardon you."

Rising up, he gave me a glass of sugared water, saying, "Now go and sleep. The poor blackbirds will not trouble you any more, and God has pardoned you because you are sorry. So now you can sleep quietly. But from to-morrow you will not tend the goats. A boy of your age ought to go to school."

I went back to my room more at ease, and slept quite happily. The next morning Uncle Bernard took me to our old schoolmaster, Tobie Veyrius. Speaking truly, it seemed hard to me at the beginning to remain shut up in a room from morn to eve, without daring to stir. Yes, it struck me as very hard. I longed to get back to the open air; but on this earth you arrive at nothing without giving yourself considerable trouble, and then the work ended by becoming a pleasant

habit. It is even, all things considered, the purest and most solid of our pleasures.

Now Uncle Bernard is very old. He spends his time sitting in a big arm-chair behind the stove in winter, and in summer on the stone bench before the house, in the shadow of the vine that covers the front. And I am a doctor. I take his place. At dawn in the morning I get on horseback, and I do not come back till the evening, worn out with fatigue. It is a hard life, especially in the season of the deep snow-storms. And yet that does not prevent me from being happy.

The shell is always in its place. Sometimes, after my rides in the mountains, I take it up, as in the golden days of my childhood, and listen to the murmuring echo of my thoughts. They are not always joyful. At times they are very sad, when one of my poor patients is in peril of death, and I can do nothing to help. But never are they so threatening as on the evening of the adventure with the blackbird's nest. He alone is happy, my dear friends, who can listen without fear to the voice of his conscience. Rich or poor, he experiences the most complete felicity it is given man to know in this world.

THE INVENTOR

ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

ON the twenty-ninth day of July 1835, Kasper Boeck, a shepherd of the village of Hirschwiller, his large felt hat hanging upon his shoulders, his canvas wallet hanging by his side, and followed by his great yellow-pawed dog, presented himself about nine o'clock in the evening at the house of Burgomaster Petrousse, who had just finished supper, and was helping himself to a glass of kirschenwasser to aid his digestion.

The Burgomaster was a tall thin man, and wore on his lip a large grizzly moustache. He had, in former days, served in the army of the Archduke Charles; and, while possessed of a good-natured disposition, he ruled the village of Hirschwiller with a wag of his finger and a nod of his head.

"Burgomaster!" cried the shepherd in a state of excitement; but Petrousse, without waiting to hear him further, frowned and said:

"Kasper Boeck, begin by taking off your hat; send out your dog, and then speak plainly without spluttering, in order that I may understand you."

Whereupon the Burgomaster, standing near the table, quietly emptied his glass, and sucked the fringe of his great moustache with an air of indifference.

Kasper sent out his dog and returned, cap in hand.

"Now," said Petrousse, seeing the shepherd somewhat composed, "tell me what has happened."

"The ghost has appeared again in the ruins of Geirstein!"

"Ah! I doubt that very much. Have you seen it, Kasper?"

"That I have, Burgomaster, very plainly."

"What was it like?"

"It looked like a little man."

"Good."

Then the old soldier, unhooking his gun from above the door, slung it over his shoulder and addressed the shepherd:

"Go and tell the constable to meet me directly in the little lane of

the hollies," said he. "Your ghost is likely to prove some vagabond rascal; but if it should turn out to be only a fox, I'll make its skin into a cap with long ears for you."

So saying the Burgomaster strode out, followed humbly by Kasper Boeck.

The weather was charming. Whilst the shepherd hastened to knock at the door of the constable, Petrousse ensconced himself in a grove of elders which skirted the back of the old village church. Two minutes later Kasper and Hans Goerner, his short sword dangling by his side, joined the Burgomaster at a sharp trot. The three advanced towards the ruins of Geirstein.

These ruins, situated at about twenty minutes' walk from the village, appeared insignificant enough, consisting of several fragments of a broken-down wall, some four or six feet in height, which made themselves barely visible amidst the brushwood. Archæologists called them the aqueducts of Seranus, the Roman camp of Holderloch, or the vestiges of Theodoric, according to their fancy. The only remarkable feature about these ruins was the flight of stairs of a cavern cut in the rock. Contrary to most winding stairs, instead of the concentric circles contracting at every downward sweep, the spiral of this hollow increased in width in such a manner that the bottom of the hollow became three times as large as the outlet.

Could this be a caprice of architecture? or what other strange cause determined so odd a structure? It is a matter which need concern us little; sufficient for the present is the fact, that in the cavern might be heard that vague murmur which any one may hear by applying the hollow of a shell to his ear: you could hear also the step of the wayfarer upon the gravel, the sighing of the breeze, the rustling of the leaves, and even the conversation of the passers-by.

The three travellers ascended the little footpath which lay between the vines and the cabbage-gardens of Hirschwiller.

"I can see nothing," broke forth the Burgomaster, turning up his nose mockingly.

"Nor I either," Hans chimed in, imitating the tone of his superior.

"Oh, it is in the hole," murmured the shepherd.

"We shall see, we shall see," the Burgomaster replied confidently. And after this fashion in about a quarter of an hour they reached the mouth of the cavern.

I have said that the night was clear, bright, and perfectly calm.

The moon, as far as the eye could reach, lit with bluish tints one of those nocturnal landscapes clothed with silvery trees, the shadows of which upon the ground seem traced in the firm dark lines of a pencil. The heath and the broom in blossom perfumed the breeze with an odour sharpened by the night air ; and the frogs of a neighbouring marsh croaking their hoarse strains broke from time to time the silence of the night.

But all these appearances escaped the attention of our worthy rustics ; they thought only of laying hands upon the ghost.

Arriving at the cavern mouth the three halted and listened. Then they looked into the darkness : nothing could be seen, nothing stirred.

" Confound it," exclaimed the Burgomaster, " we have forgotten to bring a bit of candle with us. Get down the stair, Kasper, you know the way better than I do ; I will follow you."

At this proposal the shepherd recoiled hastily. If he had followed his own inclination the poor fellow would have taken to his heels : his piteous looks caused the Burgomaster to fall into fits of laughter.

" Very well then, Hans, since Kasper is afraid to descend, you must lead the way."

" But—but, good Burgomaster," expostulated the constable, " you know there are some of the steps awanting. We run the risk of breaking our necks."

" Then send on your dog, Kasper," continued the Burgomaster.

The shepherd called his dog ; he showed him the stairs, he urged him forward, but the dog no more than the men inclined to make the venture.

At this moment a brilliant idea occurred to Hans.

" Ha ! Mister Petrousse," he exclaimed, " suppose you fire a shot into the cave ? "

" By my faith," cried the Burgomaster, " you are right. We shall see clearly at any rate."

And without hesitating the bold man approached the staircase holding his gun. But by reason of the acoustic effects which have been already pointed out, the ghost, the vagabond, or whatever it was occupied the cavern, heard all that had passed. The idea of receiving the report of a gun did not seem to suit his tastes, for in a small shrill voice he cried :

" Hold ! do not fire ! I ascend to you ! "

Then the three besiegers regarded each other, subduing their

laughter, and the Burgomaster again bending over the hollow shouted in rude tone :

“ Make haste, rascal, or I fire ! ”

He shouldered his gun. The click of the lock seemed to hasten the ascent of the mysterious individual, and several stones, detached in his haste, were heard to roll to the bottom. Nevertheless, more than a minute elapsed before any one appeared, the cavern being at least sixty feet in depth.

What could engage that man in the midst of such darkness ? Surely he must be some great criminal ! Thus thought at least the Burgomaster and his attendants.

At length a vague form emerged from the shade. Then slowly, step by step, a little lean red-haired man, four and a half feet in height, his complexion sallow, his eye sparkling like a magpie's, his hair in disorder, and his clothes in tatters, issued from the cavern crying :

“ By what right, wretches, do you come to disturb my studies ? ”

This authoritative speech was not at all in keeping with the dress and figure of the little fellow, so the Burgomaster replied indignantly :

“ Make haste to prove yourself an honest man, you wretched imp, or I shall begin by giving you a thrashing.”

“ A thrashing ! ” cried the manikin, dancing with rage and drawing himself up under the nose of the Burgomaster.

“ Yes, a thrashing,” replied Petrousse, who, nevertheless, could not help admiring the courage of the dwarf, “ if you do not reply in a satisfactory manner to the questions I am about to put to you. I am the Burgomaster of Hirschwiller ; here is the constable, the shepherd and his dog ; we are stronger than you, observe ; be wise, therefore, and tell me peaceably what you are, what you do here, and why you do not appear in the light of day. After that we shall see what is to be done with you.”

“ All that does not concern you,” replied the little man in his harsh voice ; “ I will not answer you.”

“ In that case then, forward, march ! ” the Burgomaster responded, seizing him by the neck, “ you shall take up your quarters in prison.”

The little fellow struggled and twisted like a weasel : he even attempted to bite, and the dog was already manifesting designs upon his calves, when, thoroughly exhausted, he said, not without a certain dignity :

“ Release me, sir, I yield to force ; I shall follow you.”

The Burgomaster, not wanting in courtesy, became more calm in turn.

"You promise me that," said he.

"I promise you."

"That is well: walk then in front of us."

And this is how, on the night of the twenty-ninth of July 1835, the Burgomaster of Hirschwiller effected the capture of a little red-haired man, issuing from the ruins of Geirstein.

On reaching the village the constable ran to seek the key of the prison, and the captive was shut in under double lock.

The next day, towards nine o'clock, Hans Goerner, having received orders to lead the prisoner to the court-house in order to submit him to a new interrogation, betook himself with four stout fellows to the cell. They opened the door, full of curiosity to see the ghost, but what was their surprise to see him hanging by his cravat to the railing of the skylight window. Without delay they set off to the house of the Burgomaster, to apprise him of the event.

The justice of peace and the doctor of Hirschwiller drew up in legal form a deposition of the witnesses of the catastrophe; then they buried the unknown one in a neighbouring clover-field, and so the matter ended.

But about three weeks after these events I went to see my cousin Petrousse, of whom I happened to be the nearest relative and heir, circumstances which maintained between us an attachment of the closest kind. We were dining together and talking of various subjects, in the course of which he related to me the preceding history, just as I have reported it.

"It is strange, cousin," said I to him, "very strange! and you have no other trace of that mysterious being?"

"None."

"You have learned nothing which can give you a hint of his intentions?"

"Absolutely nothing, Christian."

"But what could he be doing in the cave? what could be the object of his life?"

The Burgomaster shrugged his shoulders, refilled our glasses, and replied:

"Your health, cousin."

"And yours."

We remained silent for some minutes. It was impossible for me to be satisfied with the sudden termination of this adventure, and in spite of myself I fell into a dreamy melancholy, thinking of the sad fate of certain men who appear and disappear in the world like the flowers of the field, without leaving behind them the least remembrance or the least regret.

"Cousin," I at length inquired, "how far may it be from here to the ruins of Geirstein?"

"Twenty minutes' walk at farthest. Why do you ask?"

"Just that I wish to see them."

"You know that to-day we have a meeting of the council, and that I cannot accompany you."

"Oh!" I replied, "I shall easily find them myself."

"That is unnecessary," he said, "Hans will show you the way; he has nothing better to do." And my cousin, having tapped upon his glass, called his servant and said:

"Katel, go seek Hans Goerner; let him make haste; it is now two o'clock, and I must be going."

The domestic departed, and Hans arrived without delay. He received instructions to conduct me to the ruins, and, whilst the Burgomaster proceeded leisurely to the council chamber, we mounted the brow of the hill. Hans Goerner pointed out to me with his hand the remains of the aqueduct. At this moment the rocky edge of the plateau, the blue mountains of Hundsrück, the sadly dilapidated walls covered with sombre ivy, the clang of the village bell calling the worthies of Hirschwiller to council, the panting constable clinging to the brushwood, all produced within me a sad and sombre impression I could hardly account for, unless it might be the history of the poor suicide casting a shadow on the horizon.

The staircase of the cavern appeared to me extremely curious, its spiral form elegant. The rough shrubs springing from the fissures at almost every step, and the desolate aspect of the place, accorded with my sadness.

We descended, and soon the luminous point of the opening above, which appeared to become more and more narrow, taking the form of a star with diverging rays, alone lent us its pale light.

On reaching the bottom of the cave it was a wondrous sight which the whole flight of steps presented, lighted from above and casting their shadows with a marvellous regularity. I now heard the resonance

Petrousse had spoken of to me ; the immense granite shell had as many echoes as stones.

" Has any one descended here since the little man was discovered ? " I inquired of Hans Goerner.

" No, sir, the peasants are afraid ; they imagine that the ghost has gone back again. No one ventures into the Screech-owl's Ear."

" Do they call this the Screech-owl's Ear ? "

" Yes."

" It resembles that closely," said I, lifting my eyes. " This vault reversed forms the concha or outer part, underneath the stairs we have the tympanic cavity, and the windings of the staircase represent the cochlea, the labyrinth, and the vestibule of the ear. Here, then, is the cause of the murmur which is heard : we are at the base of a colossal ear."

" It is very likely," replied Hans, who seemed to understand nothing of my observations.

We prepared to ascend, and I had already mounted a few steps when I felt something crumble under my foot. Bending down to see what it might be, I perceived at the same time a white object before me, which proved to be a tattered sheet of paper. As for the hard substance which had been broken, I recognised in it a kind of glazed brown stone jug.

" Oh, ho ! " I cried, " this may throw some light upon the Burgomaster's story," and I rejoined Hans Goerner, who already awaited me at the mouth of the cavern.

" Now, sir," he said to me, " where do you wish to go ? "

" In the first place," said I, " let us rest a little : we shall consider presently."

I sat down upon a stone, while Hans cast his falcon eye round about the village in search of plunderers in the gardens, if any such could be discovered.

I examined carefully the stone vase, of which only a fragment remained. That fragment presented the form of the mouth of a trumpet lined with down. Its use I could not make out. I then read the fragment of the letter, which was written in a steady flowing hand. I have transcribed it word for word. It seems to form a continuation of another portion of the sheet, which I have since sought for unsuccessfully in and about the ruins.

" My micracoustic cornet has therefore the double advantage of multiplying infinitely the intensity of sounds, and of introducing into the ear nothing which will in the least annoy the observer. You could hardly credit, my dear master, the delight which one experiences in distinguishing the thousand imperceptible noises which, in the beautiful summer days, combine to form one immense hum. The bee has his song, like the nightingale ; the wasp is the linnet of the mosses ; the grasshopper the twittering swallow of the tall grass ; the gnat resembles the wren in the same degree ; its voice is only a sigh, but that sigh is melodious.

" This discovery, from a philosophic point of view, which makes us share in the life universal, surpasses in importance all that I am able to say of it.

" After so much suffering, privation, and weariness, how glorious it is to gather in at last the reward of our labours. With what thankfulness the soul lifts itself towards the divine Author of these microscopic worlds, the magnificence of which has been revealed to us ! What are now the long hours of anguish, of hunger, of scorn, which formerly overwhelmed us ? Nothing, my dear master, nothing ! Tears of gratitude moisten our eyes. We are proud of having bought by suffering new joys for humanity and of having contributed to its elevation. But however vast, however admirable may be these first results of my micracoustic cornet, its advantages do not stop there. There are others more positive, more material, so to speak, and which are demonstrable by figures.

" Just as the telescope enables us to discover myriads of worlds accomplishing their harmonious revolutions in space, so does my micracoustic cornet carry the sense of hearing beyond the bounds of the possible. Thus, sir, I do not stop at the circulation of the blood and the humours of the living body. You may hear them rush along with the impetuosity of cataracts, you may perceive them with a distinctness that would astonish you. The least irregularity in the pulse, the slightest obstacle in its course, strikes you, and produces the effect of a rock against which are dashed the waters of a torrent !

" This is unquestionably an immense gain in the development of our physiological and pathological knowledge, but it is not on this point I insist.

" On applying your ear, sir, to the ground, you can hear the hot

mineral waters springing up at immense depths ; you can estimate their volume, their currents, their obstacles. Do you desire to go further ? Descend into a subterranean vault so constructed as to collect a considerable quantity of appreciable sounds ; then at night, when all sleep, and nothing disturbs the interior sounds of our globe, listen !

“ My dear master, all that I can say at this moment—for in the midst of my deep misery, of my privations, and often indeed of my despair, there is left for me only a few lucid moments in which I can pursue my geological observations—all it is possible for me to tell you is, that the bubbling of flaming lava and the uproar of elements in ebullition is something awful and sublime, and which can only be compared to the feelings of the astronomer sounding with his glass the depths of space and infinitude. Nevertheless I must confess to you, that these experiences have need of being further studied and classified in methodic manner, in order to draw from them reliable conclusions. Also, as soon as you have deigned, my dear and worthy master, to forward to me at Newstadt the small sum I have asked of you to meet my pressing wants, we shall come to an understanding, with the view of establishing three subterranean observatories—one in the valley of Catane, the other in Iceland, and the third in one of the valleys of Capac-Uren, of Songay, or of Cayembe-Uren, the deepest in the Cordilleras, and consequently . . .”

Here the letter ended ! My hands fell by my sides, I was stupefied. Had I been reading the ravings of a madman or the realised inspirations of a genius ? What could one say ? What could one think ? This miserable man living at the bottom of a pit, dying with hunger, had been perhaps one of those chosen ones whom the Supreme Being sends upon the earth to enlighten future generations. This man had hung himself in disgust. His prayer had not been responded to, although he asked only a morsel of bread in exchange for his discovery. It was a horrible thought. Long I remained there, lost in reverie and thanking Heaven for not having willed to make of me a leading man in the community of martyrs. At length Hans Goerner, seeing me with eyes fixed and mouth agape, ventured to touch me on the shoulder.

“ Sir,” said he, “ it grows late ; the Burgomaster by this time will have returned from the council.”

" Ah ! you are right," I exclaimed, crumpling the paper in my hand ; " let us go."

We descended the bank. My cousin met us on the threshold, a smile upon his face.

" Well, friend Christian ! you have found nothing of the simpleton who hung himself ? "

" No."

" I thought as much," continued the Burgomaster. " He was doubtless some lunatic escaped from Stefansfeld or other madhouse. By my faith, he did well to hang himself. When one is good for nothing, that is the wisest thing he can do."

THE PAPERS OF MME. JEANNETTE

ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

EVERY day after school I used to go and see Jean Pierre Coustel, the turner, at work at the end of the village. He was an old man, half bald, his feet in big torn shoes, and a rat-tail wig frisking about his back. He loved to talk about his campaigns along the Rhine and the Loire and in Vendée. Then he would look at you and laugh softly. His little wife, Madame Jeannette, spun behind him in the shadow. She had large black eyes and hair as white as flax. She would stop spinning and listen every time Jean Pierre spoke of Nantes. They were married there in 1793.

I can see it all as if it were yesterday ; the two little windows surrounded with ivy ; the three hives on a plank above the old, worm-eaten door ; the bees fluttering in a sunbeam on the thatched roof ; Jean Pierre, his back curved, turning chair-legs or bobbins ; the shavings curling up like corkscrews. . . . It is all before me !

And I can see at evening, Jacques Chatillon, the timber merchant, with his big red whiskers, coming in the evening, his measure under his arm ; the gamekeeper Benassis, his bag on his hip and his little cap over his ear ; Monsieur Nadasi, the sheriff's officer, walking with his nose in the air, spectaclled, his hands in his tail pockets, as though he was proclaiming to the world, " I am Nadasi who carries summonses to men who will not pay their debts " ; then my uncle Eustache, and many others, without speaking of the wife of the little tailor Rigodin, who came to fetch her husband at nine o'clock, in order to be treated to a drink. For in addition to being a turner, Coustel kept a wine-shop, and a fir-branch hung from his little house. In the winter, when it was raining or the snow was banked up to the windows, it was pleasant to sit in the old hovel, and listen to the fire humming to the spinning-wheel of Jeannette, while gusts of wind outside swept through the village.

I, quite a child, never stirred from my corner until Uncle Eustache, knocking the ashes out of his pipe, said to me, " Come, Francis, let us be off ! Good-night to you all." How all these far-off

things come back to me, fresh and vivid, when I think of them. But what I remember above all is the story of the marshes of old Jeannette—the lands she possessed along the sea-shore in Vendée, which might have made the Coustels rich if they had claimed their property sooner.

It appears that in 1793 a good many people were drowned at Nantes, and principally the old nobility. They were bound together, and thrown in a boat, and taken out to the Loire, and there the boats were sunk. It was in the days of the Terror, and the peasants of Vendée also shot all the Republican troops they could get. Both parties were bent on exterminating the other ; there was no pity for any one. But each time a Republican trooper offered to marry some noble girl who was going to be drowned, and the unhappy creature agreed to take him as her husband, she was at once released. And that was how Madame Jeannette became the wife of Coustel. She was on one of the boats at the age of sixteen—an age when it is terrible to die ! White with fear, she looked around to see if there was any one to take pity on her. Jean Pierre Coustel, who was passing, his gun on his shoulder at the moment when the boat was leaving, saw the young girl and cried :

“ Stop a moment ! . . . Citizeness, will you take me ? I will save your life ! ”

And Jeannette, almost dead with fright, fell in his arms, and he took her away and they were married at the town hall.

Old Jeannette never talked about her former life. She had been very happy in her girlhood. She had had a maid and servants, horses and carriages, and then she had become the wife of a poor devil of a Republican trooper. She had cooked his food and mended his ragged clothes ; her old ideas of castles and manor-houses and curtsying peasant women in Vendée faded from her mind. . . . So things go in this world ! And sometimes Nadasi would mock the poor old woman.

“ Your ladyship, half a pint ! . . . Your ladyship, a glass of wine ! ” He would ask her what was the latest news from her estates. She would look at him with tightening lips ; her pale cheeks would flush, and it would seem as if she were going to make some reply ; but in the end she would lower her head, and go on spinning in silence.

If Nadasi had not spent a fair amount of money in the wine-shop, Coustel would have thrust him out of the door. But when you are poor, there are many things you must put up with, and the cads know it. They never insult any one like my uncle Eustache, who would pull

their ears for them ; they are too cunning for that. But we all know this sort of creature, and I will go on with my story.

One evening we were sitting in the wine-shop towards the end of the autumn of 1830 ; it rained in floods, and at eight o'clock the game-keeper Benassis entered, saying, " What weather ! If this continues the three ponds will overflow."

He shook his cap and drew his blouse over his shoulders to dry it behind the stove. Then he sat down at the end of the bench, telling Nadasi to move further up.

In spite of the rain the gamekeeper was in a good humour. He said a flock of wild geese had settled on the ponds, and that the shooting over the marshes would soon begin. Uncle Eustache said he would willingly join the shooting party in a boat, but that wading through the mud, with the risk of dropping head over heels into it, was not the kind of sport that amused him. Everybody was having his say on the matter, and old Jeannette, sunk in thought, began to murmur :

" I also had marshes . . . ponds ! "

" Ho ! " cried Nadasi with a jeering air, " listen to this ! Dame Jeannette had marshes of her own ! "

" Undoubtedly I had," she said.

" Where, most noble lady ? "

" In Vendée, by the sea-shore."

And as Nadasi shrugged his shoulders, as though saying, " The old woman is mad ! " Jeannette went up the little wooden ladder at the back of the hovel, and then came down with a basket full of odds and ends—cotton, needles, spools, and yellow parchments.

" Here are our papers," she said. " The marshes, the ponds, and manor-house are mentioned with the other things. We tried to claim them under Louis the Eighteenth, but my relatives would not give them back to us, because I had dishonoured the family by my marriage. It would have been necessary to bring a lawsuit, and we hadn't the money. Isn't that true, Coustel ? "

" Yes," said the turner quietly.

Among all those present nobody thought anything of these things, any more than of the bundles of paper money of the time of the First Republic that are found in many old chests. The old paper money is valueless, so the old deeds. . . .

Nadasi, still with a grin on his face, opened one of the parchments, and, lifting his nose, started to read it with the idea of getting more

fun out of Jeannette. But his look suddenly became serious ; he wiped his spectacles, and turned towards the poor old woman who had resumed her spinning.

" Do you mind my taking this away and studying it, Madame Jeannette ? " he said.

" My God ! do what you like with it," she replied. " We have no further use for it, and besides, Coustel and myself, we cannot read."

Nadasi, with a grave air, folded the parchment up, and put it in his pocket with several others, saying :

" I will look into it. It is just striking nine. Good-night."

He went out, and the others soon followed him. But eight days afterwards Nadasi set out for Vendée. He had got Coustel and Jeannette to sign the power of attorney, with which he could recover, alienate, and sell all their property on their behalf. The rumour spread through the village that Madame Jeannette was of noble birth, that she had a castle in Vendée, and that the Coustels would receive an immense fortune. But Nadasi wrote that he had come six weeks too late, and that the brother of Madame Jeannette had shown him some documents proving that he had held the marshes for more than thirty years, and that when any property had been occupied without protest for more than thirty years, the absent owner lost all right to it. So that the Coustels, having let their noble relative keep possession of the estate, had surrendered all claim to it.

The poor couple, who had thought they were rich and who had been complimented and flattered by all the villagers, felt their poverty far more keenly than they had done before. It was not long before they died, one after the other.

Nadasi never came back to the village. No doubt he found something that paid him better than trotting about with summonses.

A good many years passed by. Louis Philippe went away ; the Second Republic rose and fell, and the Third Napoleon reigned over France. The bones of the Coustels had moulded into dust in their grave on the hill. I occupied my grandfather's position at the post office, and Uncle Eustache, as he used to say himself, had taken his passport. It was then, one morning during the watering season at Baden, that something astonishing happened that still gives me food for reflection. Several postchaises had passed down the street, and about eleven o'clock a courier came to tell me that the Baron de Roselière, his master, was approaching.

I was breakfasting, but I at once rose to see to the relay. When the horses were being harnessed, a head looked out from the carriage—an old head, deeply wrinkled, with hollow cheeks, and golden spectacles on the nose. It was the face of Nadasi, but aged, worn out, and tired. Behind him was the head of a young girl. I was bewildered.

“What is the name of this village?” he said, yawning behind his hand.

“Laneuville, my lord.”

He did not recognise me and sat down. Then I saw an old lady in the depths of the carriage. The horses were harnessed, and they went away.

God pardon me if I am wrong, but I still think that Nadasi sold the documents of poor Jeannette and then got a new skin for himself, like many other swindlers, by taking a noble name to cover his tracks! Who could have stopped him? Didn't he have all the titles, all the parchments, and the general power of attorney? Poor old Jeannette! . . . What miseries we meet in life! . . . And to think that God lets it all go on!

EDMOND ABOUT
1828-1885

WHICH WAS THE MADMAN?

I

I AM sure that you have passed Doctor Auvray's house twenty times without supposing that miracles are performed there. It is a modest-looking house, without any display or any sign : it does not even bear on its door the unattractive inscription—*Maison de santé*. It is situated near the end of the Avenue Montaigne, between Prince Soltikoff's Gothic palace and the great Triat's gymnasium where they regenerate mankind on the trapeze. A gate, painted in imitation of bronze, opens upon a little garden of lilacs and roses. The porter's lodge is at the right ; the building at the left contains the doctor's rooms, and those of his wife and daughter. The principal building is at the remote end : it turns its back upon the avenue, and opens all its windows to the south-east on a little park, well planted with chest-nuts and lindens.

There the doctor treats, and often cures, people who have lost their minds. I would not take you into his establishment if you ran any risk of meeting all kinds of insanity ; but do not be afraid ; you will not have the distressing spectacle of imbecility, paralytic insanity, or even utter loss of intelligence. M. Auvray has created for himself what is called a specialty : he treats monomania. He is an excellent man, full of intelligence and learning : a real philosopher and pupil of Esquirol and Laromiguière. If you were ever to meet him, with his bald head, well-shaven chin, black vestments, and placid face, you would not know whether he were a doctor, professor, or priest. When he opens his heavy eyes, you expect him to say, " My child ! " His eyes are not ugly, considering how they protrude, and they throw around him glances comprehensive, limpid, and serene, beneath which you see a world of kindly thoughts. Those large eyes are the open doors of a beautiful soul.

M. Auvray's vocation was decided when he was at the medical school. He gave himself up passionately to the study of monomania—that curious disturbance of the faculties which is seldom due to a

physical cause, which does not answer to any perceptible lesion in the nervous system, and which is cured by moral treatment. He was seconded in his observations by a young female superintendent of one of the wards, who was quite pretty and very well educated. He fell in love with her, and as soon as he got his degree married her. It was a modest entrance upon life. Nevertheless, he had a little property which he devoted to founding the establishment you know. With a touch of charlatanism, he could have made a fortune ; he was satisfied to make his expenses. He avoided notoriety, and whenever he attained a marvellous cure he did not proclaim it from the house-tops. His reputation made itself, and almost in spite of him. His treatise on *Monomanie raisonnée*, which he published through Baillière in 1842, is in its sixth edition without the author having sent a single copy to the printers. Modesty is certainly good in itself, but it ought not to be carried to an extreme. Mlle. Auvray has not more than twenty thousand francs dowry, and she will be twenty-two years old in April.

About a fortnight ago (it was, I think, on Wednesday, December 13th) a cab stopped before M. Auvray's gate. The driver rang, and the gate was opened. The carriage went on to the doctor's house, and two men briskly entered his office. The servant begged them to sit down and wait till the doctor had finished his rounds. It was ten o'clock in the morning.

One of the strangers was a man of fifty, large, brown, full-blooded, of high colour, passably ugly, and specially ill-made ; his ears were pierced, his hands large, and his thumbs enormous. Fancy a workman dressed in his employer's clothes : such is M. Morlot.

His nephew, François Thomas, is a young man of twenty-three, hard to describe, because he is just like everybody else. He is neither large nor small, handsome nor ugly, developed like a Hercules nor spindled like a dandy, but, maintaining the happy medium throughout, unobtrusive from head to foot, hair of no particular colour, and mind and clothes of the same. When he entered M. Auvray's house he seemed very much agitated ; he walked up and down apparently in a rage, would not keep still anywhere, looked at twenty things at once, and would have handled them all if his hands had not been tied.

"Calm yourself," said his uncle ; "what I'm doing is for your good. You'll be happy here, and the doctor will cure you."

"I'm not sick. Why have you tied me?"

"Because you would have thrown me out of the carriage. You're not in your right mind, my poor François; M. Auvray will restore you."

"I reason as clearly as you do, uncle, and I don't know what you're talking about. My mind is clear, my judgment sound, and my memory excellent. Would you like me to repeat some verses? Shall I translate some Latin? Here's a Tacitus in this bookcase. . . . If you would prefer a different experiment, I can solve a problem in Arithmetic or Geometry. . . . You don't care to have me? Very well! Listen to what we have done this morning:

"You came in at eight o'clock, not to wake me, for I was not asleep, but to get me out of bed. I dressed myself, without Germain's help; you asked me to go with you to Dr. Auvray's; I refused; you insisted; I got angry; Germain helped you to tie my hands; I'll discharge him to-night. I owe him thirteen days' wages: that is thirteen francs, as I engaged him at thirty francs a month. You owe him damages: you are the cause of his losing his Christmas gift. Is this reasoning? And do you still think you can make me out crazy? Ah! my dear uncle, take a better view of things! Remember that my mother was your sister! What would she say—my poor mother!—if she were to see me here? I bear you no ill-will, and everything can be arranged pleasantly. You have a daughter, Mlle. Claire Morlot. . . ."

"Ah! there I have you! You see clearly enough that you are out of your head. I have a daughter? I? But I'm a bachelor. A confirmed bachelor!"

"You have a daughter," replied François mechanically.

"My poor nephew! Let us see. Listen to me carefully. Have you a cousin?"

"A cousin? No. I have no cousin. Oh! you won't find me out of my reckoning; I have no cousins of either sex."

"I am your uncle; isn't that so?"

"Yes, you are my uncle, although you forgot it this morning."

"If I had a daughter she would be your cousin; now you have no cousin, therefore I have no daughter."

"You're right. I had the happiness of seeing her this summer at Ems Springs, with her mother. I love her; I have reason to think that I am not indifferent to her, and I have the honour to ask you for her hand."

“ Whose hand ? ”

“ Mademoiselle's hand—your daughter's.”

“ Well, so be it,” thought M. Morlot ; “ M. Auvray will be very skilful if he cures him. I will pay six thousand francs board from my nephew's income. Six from thirty leaves twenty-four. I shall be rich. Poor François ! ”

He seated himself and casually opened a book. “ Sit down there,” he said to the young man ; “ I'll read you something. Try to listen : it will calm you down.” He read :

“ Monomania is the persistence of one idea, the exclusive domination of a single passion. Its seat is in the heart ; there it must be sought and there it must be cured. Its cause is love, fear, vanity, ambition, remorse. It displays itself by the same symptoms as passion generally ; sometimes by joy, gaiety, daring, and noise ; sometimes by timidity, sadness, and silence.”

During the reading, François seemed to grow quiet and drop asleep. “ Bravo ! ” thought M. Morlot. “ Here's a miracle performed by medicine already : it puts a man to sleep who has been neither hungry nor drowsy.” François was not asleep, but he played possum to perfection. He nodded at proper intervals, and regulated the heavy monotone of his breathing with mathematical accuracy. Uncle Morlot was taken in : he continued reading in a subdued voice, then yawned, then stopped reading, then let his book slip down, then shut his eyes, and then went sound asleep, much to the satisfaction of his nephew, who watched him maliciously out of the corner of his eye.

François began by moving his chair : M. Morlot budged no more than a tree. François walked about the room, making his shoes creak on the inlaid floor : M. Morlot began snoring. Then the crazy man went to the writing-table, found an eraser, pushed it into a corner, fixed it firmly by the handle, and cut the cord which bound his arms. He freed himself, recovered the use of his hands, repressed a cry of joy, and stealthily approached his uncle. In two minutes M. Morlot was firmly bound, but with so much delicacy that his sleep was not even troubled.

François admired his work, and picked up the book which had slipped to the floor. It was the last edition of the *Monomanie raisonnée*. He took it into a corner, and set to reading like a bookworm, while he awaited the doctor's arrival.

II

It now becomes necessary for me to recount the antecedents of François and his uncle. François was the son of a late toy dealer in the Passage du Saumon named M. Thomas. Toy selling is a good business ; a hundred per cent is cleared on almost every article. Since his father's death, François had enjoyed a competence of the degree called " honourable," undoubtedly because it obviates the necessity of doing dishonourable things ; perhaps, too, because it makes practicable the doing of the honours to one's friends : he had thirty thousand francs income.

His tastes were extremely simple, as I think I have told you. He had an innate preference for things which are not glaring, and naturally selected his gloves, vests, and coats from the series of modest colours lying between black and brown. He did not remember having dreamed of plumes, even in his tenderest childhood, and the ribbons most desired had never troubled his sleep. He never carried an opera-glass, because, he said, his eyes were good ; nor wore a scarf-pin, because his scarf would keep in place without a pin ; but the real reason was that he was afraid of attracting attention. The very polish of his boots dazzled him. He would have been doomed to wretchedness if the accident of birth had afflicted him with a noticeable name. It, for the sake of giving him one, his sponsors had called him Americ or Fernand, he would never have signed it in his life. Happily, his names were as unobtrusive as if he had chosen them himself.

His timidity prevented him from entering upon any career. After crossing the threshold of his baccalaureate, he stopped in that great door which opens upon everything, and stood rapt in contemplation before the seven or eight roads which were lying before him. The bar seemed to him too boisterous, medicine too devoid of rest, a tutorship too arrogant, commerce too complicated, the civil service too constraining.

As to the army, it was useless to think of that : not that he was afraid to fight, but he trembled at the idea of wearing a uniform. He remained, then, in his original way of life, not because it was the easiest, but because it was the most obscure : he lived on his income.

As he had not earned his money himself, he lent it freely. In return for so rare a virtue, Heaven gave him plenty of friends. He loved them all sincerely, and acceded to their wishes with very good grace.

When he met one of them on the Boulevard, he was always the one to be taken by the arm, turned about, and taken where his friend desired. Don't think that he was either foolish, shallow, or ignorant. He knew three or four modern languages, Latin, Greek, and everything else usually learned at college ; he had some ideas of commerce, manufactures, agriculture, and literature, and he estimated a new book well, if there was nobody near to listen to his opinion.

But it was among women that his weakness showed itself in its full strength. It was a necessity of his nature always to be in love with somebody, and if in rubbing his eyes in the morning he saw no gleam of love on the horizon, he got up out of sorts and infallibly put his stockings on wrong side out. Whenever he was at a concert or a play, he began by searching among the audience for some face that pleased him, and was in love with it the whole evening. If he found one to suit him, the play was fine, the concert delicious ; otherwise, everybody played badly or sang false. His heart so abhorred a vacuum, that in presence of a mediocre beauty it spurred him to believe her perfect. You will realise without my help that this universal susceptibility was by no means licentiousness, but innocence. He loved all women without telling them so, for he had never dared to speak to one. He was the most candid and inoffensive of roués ; Don Juan, if you please, but before Doña Julia.

When he was in love, he rehearsed to himself courageous declarations, which regularly died upon his lips. He paid his court ; laid open the very bottom of his soul ; held long conversations and charming dialogues, in which he made both the questions and replies. He made appeals energetic enough to soften rocks, and warm enough to melt ice ; but no woman was drawn towards him by his mute aspirations : one must *want*, to be loved. There is a great difference between desiring and wanting ; desiring floats easily upon the clouds : wanting runs on foot among the flints. One watches for every chance, the other demands nothing but its own existence ; wanting marches straight to its point over hedges and ditches, ravines and mountains ; desiring remains seated at home and cries for the moon in its sweetest voice.

Nevertheless, in the August of this very year, four months before pinioning his uncle's arms, François had dared to love face to face. At the Ems Springs he had met a young girl almost as shy as himself, whose shuddering timidity had given him courage. She was a Parisienne, frail and delicate as fruit grown on the shady side of a

wall : transparent as those lovely children whose blue blood can be seen distinctly under their skin. She accompanied her mother, whom an inveterate disorder (a chronic trouble of the throat, if I am not mistaken) obliged to take the waters. Mother and daughter must have lived apart from the world, for they regarded the boisterous crowd of bathers with long looks of astonishment. François was casually presented to them by one of his friends, who had become cured and was going to Italy through Germany. He attended them assiduously for a month, and was virtually their only companion. For sensitive souls, the crowd is a vast solitude ; the more noise the world makes around them, the more do they shrink into their corner to whisper into each other's ears.

The young Parisienne and her mother went straight into François' heart as naturally as from one room to the next, and found it pleasant there. Every day they discovered new treasures, like the navigators who first set foot in America : they wandered with ever fresh delights over this mysterious and virgin land. They never asked themselves if he were rich or poor ; they were satisfied to know that he was good ; and nothing they might find could be more precious to them than that heart of gold. On his side, François was inspired with his metamorphosis.

Has any one ever told you how spring breaks upon the gardens in Russia ? Yesterday the snow covered everything : to-day comes a ray of sunshine which puts winter to flight. At noon the trees burst their buds : by night they are covered with leaves : to-morrow they almost bear fruit. So did François's love bloom and bear its freight of promise. His coldness and constraint were carried away like icicles in a thaw ; the shamefaced and pusillanimous boy in a few weeks became a man. I do not know who first uttered the word *marriage*, but what difference does it make ? The word is always understood when two true hearts speak of love.

François was of age and his own master, but his beloved depended upon a father whose consent it was necessary to obtain. There the unfortunate youth's timidity mastered him again. It was well enough for Claire to say to him, " Write unhesitatingly ; my father is already notified : you will receive his consent by return mail." He wrote and re-wrote this letter over a hundred times, without being able to make up his mind to send it. Nevertheless, it was an easy task, and the most ordinary intelligence would have performed it with credit,

François knew the name, position, fortune, and even the temperament of his future father-in-law. They had let him into all the domestic secrets ; he was almost one of the family. What was left for him to do ? To state, in a few words, what he was and what he had ; the reply was not doubtful.

He hesitated so long, that at the end of a month Claire and her mother were forced to entertain misgivings regarding him. I think they would have still been patient for a fortnight longer, but the paternal wisdom did not permit it. If Claire was in love, if her lover had not decided to make a formal declaration of his intention, the thing to do was, without losing any time, to get the girl in a safe place in Paris. Possibly then M. François Thomas would make up his mind to ask her in marriage : he knew where to find her.

One day when François went to take the ladies out walking, the hotel-keeper told him that they had left for Paris. Their rooms were already occupied by an English family. Such a rude blow, falling suddenly upon such a delicate head, destroyed his reason. He went out like an idiot, and began looking for Claire in all the places where he had been used to taking her. He went to his lodgings with a violent pain in his head, which he treated, God only knows how. He had himself bled, took boiling hot baths, applied ferocious sinapisms, and, in short, revenged on his body the tortures of his soul. When he considered himself cured, he started for France, resolved to apply for Claire's hand before changing his coat. He hurried to Paris, sprang from the car, forgot his baggage, jumped into a cab, and cried to the driver :

“ To *her* ! Gallop ! ”

“ Where to, boss ? ”

“ To Monsieur —, Rue —, I don't know any more.” He had forgotten the name and address of the woman he loved. “ Go ahead to my house ; I'll find it again.” He gave the coachman his card and was taken home.

His concierge was a childless old man named Emmanuel. On meeting him, François bowed low and said :

“ Monsieur, you have a daughter, Mlle. Claire Emmanuel. I wanted to write you to ask for her hand ; but I thought it would be better to make the request in person.”

They realised that he was crazy, and ran to the Faubourg St. Antoine to find his Uncle Morlot.

Uncle Morlot was the most honest man in the Rue de Charonne, which is one of the longest streets in Paris. He made antique furniture with ordinary skill and extraordinary conscientiousness. It was not his way to represent stained pear-wood as ebony, or a cabinet of his own make as a mediaeval piece ! Nevertheless, he knew as well as anybody the art of cracking new wood and making it appear full of worm-holes of which worms were entirely innocent. But it was his principle and his law to wrong nobody. With a moderation almost absurd in the manufacture of articles of luxury, he limited his profits to five per cent over and above the general expenses of his establishment ; consequently he had gained more respect than money. When he made out a bill, he went over the addition three times, so fearful was he of misleading somebody to his own advantage.

After thirty years of this business, he was just about as rich as when he left his apprenticeship. He had made his living like the humblest of his employees, and he asked himself, with a touch of jealousy, how M. Thomas had managed to lay up money. His brother-in-law looked down on him a little, with the vanity natural to parvenus, but he looked down upon his brother-in-law more effectually, with the pride of a man who never cared to become a parvenu. He made a parade of his mediocrity, and said with plebeian self-conceit, " At least I'm sure that I've nothing that belongs to anybody else."

Man is a strange animal : I am not the first who has said so. This excellent M. Morlot, whose super-scrupulous honesty amused the whole faubourg, felt an agreeable tickling at the bottom of his heart when they came to tell him of his nephew's disorder. He heard an insinuating little voice saying to him, very low, " If François is insane, you'll be his guardian." Probity hastened to reply, " We won't be any richer."—" How ? " answered the voice. " Certainly an insane man's board never costs thirty thousand francs a year. Moreover, we shall have all the trouble ; we'll have to neglect our business ; we deserve more compensation ; we won't wrong anybody."—" But," replied Disinterestedness, " one ought to help his relations without charging them for it."—" Certainly," murmured the voice.—" Then why didn't our family ever do anything for us ? "—" Bah ! " responded the goodness of his heart. " This won't amount to anything, anyway ; it's only a false alarm. François will be well in a couple of days."—" Possibly, however," continued the obstinate voice, " the malady will kill the patient, and we'll inherit without wronging anybody. We've worked

thirty years for the sovereign who reigns at Potsdam ; who knows but what a blow on a cracked head may make our fortune ? ”

The good man stopped his ears ; but his ears were so large, so ample, so nobly expanded, like a conch-shell, that the subtle and persevering little voice always slipped into them in spite of him. The factory in the Rue de Charonne was left to the care of the foreman, and the uncle established his winter quarters in his nephew's pretty rooms. He slept in a good bed, and liked it. He sat at an excellent table, and the cramps in the stomach which he had complained of for many years were cured by magic. He was waited upon, dressed, and shaved by Germain, and he got used to it. Little by little he consoled himself for seeing his nephew sick. He fell into the habit of thinking that perhaps François never would get well ; nevertheless, he repeated to himself now and then, to keep his conscience easy, “ I'm not injuring anybody.”

At the end of three months, he grew tired of having a crazy man in the house, for he began to feel as if he were at home there himself. François's perpetual drivelling, and his mania for asking Claire in marriage, came to be an intolerable burden to the old man ; he resolved to clear the house and shut the sick man up at M. Auvray's. “ After all,” he said to himself, “ my nephew will get better care there, and I shall be more at ease. Science has recognised that it is well to give the insane change of scene to divert them : I'm doing my duty.”

With such thoughts as these he went to sleep, when François took it into his head to tie his hands ; what an awakening !

III

The doctor came in with apologies for keeping them waiting. François got up, put his hat on the table, and explained matters with great volubility, while striding up and down the room.

“ Monsieur,” said he, “ this is my maternal uncle, whom I am about to confide to your care. You see in him a man of from forty-five to fifty, hardened to manual labour and the privations of a life of hard work ; as to the rest, born of healthy parents, in a family where no case of mental aberration has ever been known. You will not, then, have to contend against an hereditary disorder. His trouble is one of the most curious monomanias which you ever had occasion to examine.

He passes with inconceivable rapidity from extreme gaiety to extreme depression ; it is a singular compound of monomania proper and melancholy."

" He has not entirely lost his reason ? "

" No, monsieur, he's not absolutely demented ; he's unsound on but one point, so he comes entirely within your specialty."

" What's the characteristic of his malady ? "

" Alas, monsieur, the characteristic of our times—cupidity. The poor fellow is certainly the man of the period. After working from childhood, he finds himself poor. My father, starting where he did, left me considerable property. My uncle began by being jealous ; then realising that he was my only relative, and would be my heir in case of death, or my guardian in case of insanity, as a weak mind easily believes what it desires, the unhappy man persuaded himself that I had lost my reason. He has told everybody so : will say the same to you. In the carriage, although his own hands were bound, he thought that it was he who was bringing me to you."

" When was the first attack ? "

" About three months ago. He went down and said to my concierge, with a frightened air, ' Monsieur Emmanuel, you have a daughter ; leave her in your lodge, and come and help me bind my nephew.' "

" Does he realise his condition ? Does he know that he is not himself ? "

" No, monsieur, and I think that's a good sign. I'll tell you, moreover, that he has some remarkable derangements of the vital functions, and especially of nutrition. He has entirely lost appetite, and is subject to long periods of sleeplessness."

" So much the better. A deranged person who sleeps and eats regularly is almost incurable. Let me wake him up."

M. Auvray gently shook the shoulder of the sleeper, who sprang to his feet. His first movement was to rub his eyes. When he found his hands bound, he realised what had happened while he slept, and burst out laughing.

" That's a good joke ! " he said.

François drew the doctor aside.

" You see. Well, in five minutes he will be raving."

" Leave him to me. I know how to take them." He approached his patient smiling as one does upon a child whom he wishes to amuse.

"My friend," he said, "you woke up at the right time. Did you have pleasant dreams?"

"I? I've not been dreaming. I laughed at seeing myself tied up like a bundle of sticks. People would take me for the crazy one."

"There!" said François.

"Have the kindness to let me loose, doctor. I can explain matters better when I'm free."

"My child, I'm going to untie you; but you must promise to be very good."

"Why, monsieur, do you really take me for a madman?"

"No, my friend, but you're not well. We'll take care of you and cure you. Hold still. Now your hands are free. Don't abuse it."

"Why, what the devil do you suppose I'll do? I've brought you my nephew——"

"Very well," said M. Auvray, "we'll talk about that in good time. I found you asleep; do you often sleep in the daytime?"

"Never! This stupid book——"

"Oh! oh!" said the author, "the case is serious. And so you think your nephew is mad?"

"Mad enough to be tied up, monsieur; and the proof is, that I had fastened his hands together with this rope."

"But you're the one whose hands were tied. Don't you remember that I set you free?"

"It was I? It was he! But let me explain the whole affair."

"Tut, my friend, you're getting excited: you're very red in the face. I don't want you to tire yourself. Just be content to answer my questions. You say that your nephew is ill?"

"Crazy, crazy, crazy!"

"And you are satisfied to see him crazy?"

"I?"

"Answer me frankly. You're not anxious for him to get well: isn't that so?"

"Why?"

"So that his fortune can remain in your hands. You want to be rich. You don't like having worked so long without making a fortune. You think it's your turn now?"

M. Morlot did not answer. He kept his eyes fixed on the floor. He asked himself if he were not having a bad dream, and tried to make out what was real in this experience of pinioned hands, cross-examina-

tions, and questions from a stranger who read his conscience like an open book.

"Does he hear voices?" asked M. Auvray.

The poor uncle felt his hair stand on end. He remembered that persistent little voice which kept whispering in his ear, and he answered mechanically, "Sometimes."

"Ah! he has hallucinations?"

"No, no! I'm not ill; let me go. I'll lose my senses here. Ask all my friends; they'll tell you that I'm in full possession of my faculties. Feel my pulse; you'll see that I've no fever."

"Poor uncle!" said François. "He doesn't know that insanity is madness without fever."

"Monsieur," added the doctor, "if we could only give our patients fever, we'd cure them all."

M. Morlot threw himself on the sofa; his nephew continued to pace the doctor's study.

"Monsieur," said François, "I am deeply afflicted by my uncle's misfortune, but it is a great consolation to be able to entrust him to such a man as yourself. I have read your admirable book on *La Monomanie raisonnée*; it is the most remarkable book that has been written on the subject since the *Traité des Maladies mentales*, by the great Esquirol. I know, moreover, that you are a father to your patients, so I will not insult you by recommending M. Morlot to special care. As to the expense of his treatment, I leave that entirely to you." He took a thousand-franc note from his pocket-book, and quietly laid it on the mantel. "I shall have the honour to present myself here in the course of next week. At what hour is access to the patients allowed?"

"From noon till two o'clock. As for me, I'm always at home. Good-day, monsieur."

"Stop him!" cried the poor uncle. "Don't let him go! He's the crazy one; I'll explain his madness!"

"Pray calm yourself, my dear uncle," said François, going out; "I leave you in M. Auvray's hands; he'll take good care of you."

M. Morlot tried to follow his nephew. The doctor held him back.

"What awful luck!" cried the poor uncle. "He won't say a single crazy thing! If he would only lose his bearings a little, you'd see well enough that it's not I who am crazy."

François already had hold of the door-knob. He turned on his

heel as if he had forgotten something : marched straight up to the doctor, and said to him :

“ Monsieur, my uncle’s illness is not the only motive which brought me here.”

“ Ah ! ah ! ” murmured M. Morlot, who thought he saw a ray of hope.

The young man continued :

“ You have a daughter.”

“ At last ! ” cried the poor uncle. “ You’ll bear witness that he said, ‘ You have a daughter ! ’ ”

The doctor replied to François; “ Yes, Monsieur. Explain—”

“ You have a daughter, Mlle. Claire Auvray.”

“ There it is ! There it is ! I told you that very thing ! ”

“ Yes, monsieur,” said the doctor.

“ Three months since she was at the Ems Springs with her mother.”

“ Bravo ! bravo ! ” yelled M. Morlot.

“ Yes, monsieur,” responded the doctor.

M. Morlot ran up to the doctor and said, “ You’re not the doctor ! You’re one of the patients ! ”

“ My friend,” replied the doctor, “ if you don’t behave yourself, we’ll have to give you a shower-bath.”

M. Morlot recoiled, frightened. His nephew continued :

“ Monsieur, I love Mademoiselle—your daughter. I have some hope that I’m loved in return, and if her sentiments have not changed since September, I have the honour to ask you for her hand.”

The doctor answered, “ This is Monsieur François Thomas, then, with whom I’ve the honour of speaking ? ”

“ The same, monsieur, and I ought to have begun by telling you my name.”

“ Monsieur, permit me to tell you that you’ve decidedly taken your own time.”

At this moment, the doctor’s attention was drawn to M. Morlot, who was rubbing his hands with a sort of passion.

“ What’s the matter with you, my friend ? ” he inquired in his sweet and paternal voice.

“ Nothing ! Nothing ! I’m only rubbing my hands.”

“ But why ? ”

“ There’s something there that bothers me.”

"Show it to me ; I don't see anything."

"You don't see it ? There, there, between the fingers. I see it plainly, I do !"

"What do you see ?"

"My nephew's money. Take it away, doctor ! I'm an honest man ; I don't want anybody's property."

While the doctor was listening attentively to these first aberrations of M. Morlot a strange revolution took place in the appearance of François. He grew pale and cold, his teeth chattered violently. M. Auvray turned towards him to ask what had happened.

"Nothing," he replied. "She's coming. I hear her. This is joy . . . but it overcomes me. Happiness falls upon me like snow. The winter will be hard for lovers. Doctor, see what's going on in my head."

M. Morlot ran to him, saying :

"Enough ! Don't be crazy any more ! I no longer want you to be an idiot. People will say that I stole your wits. I'm honest, doctor ; look at my hands ; search my pockets ; send to my house, Rue de Charonne, in the Faubourg St. Antoine ; open all the drawers ; you'll see that I've nothing that belongs to anybody else."

The doctor stood much perplexed between his two patients, when a door opened, and Claire came in to tell her father that breakfast was waiting.

François jumped up as if propelled by a spring, but only his wishes reached Mlle. Auvray. His body fell heavily on the sofa. He could scarcely murmur a few words.

"Claire ! It is I. I love you. Will you ? . . ."

He passed his hand over his brow. His pale face flushed violently. The temples throbbed fiercely, and he felt a heavy oppression over his eyelids. Claire, as near dead as alive, caught up his two hands. His skin was dry, and his pulse so hard that the poor girl was terrified. It was not thus that she had hoped to see him again. In a few minutes a yellowish tinge spread about his nostrils ; then came nausea, and M. Auvray recognised all the symptoms of a bilious fever. "What a misfortune," he said, "that this fever didn't come to his uncle ; it would have cured him !"

He pulled the bell. The maid-servant ran in, and then Mme. Auvray, whom François scarcely recognised, so much was he overcome. The sick man had to be put to bed, and that without delay. Claire

offered her chamber and her bed. It was a pretty little couch with white curtains ; a tiny chamber and chastely attractive, upholstered in pink percale, and blooming with great bunches of heather, in azure vases. On the mantel appeared a large onyx cup. This was the only present which Claire had received from her lover ! If you are taken with fever, dear reader, I wish you such a sick-room.

While they were giving the first cares to François, his uncle, beside himself, flurried around the chamber, getting into the doctor's way, embracing the patient, seizing Mme. Auvray's hand, and crying in ear-splitting tones, " Cure him quick, quick ! I don't want him to die ; I won't permit his death ; I've a right to oppose it ; I'm his uncle and his guardian ! If you don't cure him, they'll say I killed him. I want you all to bear witness that I don't claim to be his heir. I'll give all the property to the poor. A glass of water, please, to wash my hands with."

They had to take him into the sick-wards of the establishment. There he raved so that they had to put him in a strong canvas waistcoat laced up behind, with the sleeves sewed together at the ends : that is what they call a strait-jacket. The nurses took care of him.

Mme. Auvray and her daughter took devoted care of François, although the details of the treatment were not always the most agreeable ; but the more delicate sex takes naturally to heroism. You may say that the two ladies saw in their patient a son-in-law and a husband. But I think that if he had been a stranger, he would have scarcely lost anything. St. Vincent de Paul invented only a uniform, for in every woman, of any rank, or any age, exists the essential material of a sister of charity.

Seated night and day in this chamber, filled with fever, mother and daughter employed their moments of repose in telling over their souvenirs and their hopes. They could not explain François's long silence, his sudden return, or the circumstances that had led him to the Avenue Montaigne. If he loved Claire, why had he forced himself to wait three months ? Did he need his uncle's illness to bring him to M. Auvray's ? If his love had worn out, why did he not take his uncle to some other doctor ? There are enough of them in Paris. Possibly he had thought his passion cured until Claire's presence had undeceived him ! But no, for before seeing her he had asked her in marriage.

All these questions were answered by François in his delirium. Claire, hanging on his lips, eagerly took in his lightest words ; she

talked them over with her mother and the doctor, who was not long in getting at the truth. To a man accustomed to disentangle the most confused ideas, and to read the minds of the insane like a partly obliterated page, the wanderings of fever are an intelligible language, and the most confused delirium is not without its lights. They soon knew that he had lost his reason, and under what circumstances, and they even made out how he had been the innocent cause of his uncle's malady.

Then began a new series of misgivings for Mlle. Auvray. François had been insane. Would the terrible crisis which she had unwittingly brought on cure him? The doctor assured her that fever had the privilege of indicating the exact nature of mental disturbance, that is to say, of curing it. Nevertheless, there is no rule without exceptions, especially in medicine. Suppose he were to get well, would there be no fear of relapses? Would M. Auvray give his daughter to one of his patients?

"As for me," said Claire, sadly smiling, "I'm not afraid of anything: I would risk it. I'm the cause of his sufferings; ought not I to console him? After all, his insanity is restricted to asking for my hand: he'll have no more occasion to ask it when I'm his wife; then we'll not have anything to fear. The poor child is sick only from excess of love; cure it, dear father, but not too thoroughly. I want him always to be mad enough to love me as I love him."

"We'll see," responded M. Auvray. "Wait till the fever is past. If he's ashamed of having been ill, if I find him sad or melancholy when he gets well, I can't answer for anything. It, on the other hand, he looks back upon his disorder without shame or regret, if he speaks of it resignedly, if he meets the people who have been taking care of him without repugnance, I can laugh at the idea of relapses."

"Ah, father, why should he be ashamed of having loved to excess? It is a noble and generous madness which never enters petty souls. And how can he feel repugnance on meeting those who have nursed him? For they are we!"

After six days of delirium, an abundant perspiration carried off the fever, and the patient began to convalesce. When he found himself in a strange room, between Mme. and Mlle. Auvray, his first idea was that he was still at the hotel of the Quatre Saisons in the principal street of Ems. His feebleness, his emaciation, and the presence of the doctor, led him to other thoughts; he had his memory,

but vaguely. The doctor came to his aid. He opened the truth to him cautiously, as they measure out food for a body enfeebled by fasting. François commenced by listening to his own story as to a romance in which he had not played any part ; he was another man, an entirely new man, and he came out of the fever as out of a tomb. Little by little the gaps in his memory closed up. His brain seemed full of empty places, which filled up one by one without any sudden jars. Very soon he was quite master of himself, and fully conscious of the past. The cure was a work of science, but, above all, of patience.

It is in such particulars that the paternal treatment of M. Auvray is so much admired. That excellent man had a genius for gentleness. On the 25th of December, François, seated on the side of his bed, and ballasted with some chicken soup and half the yolk of an egg, told, without any interruption, trouble, or wandering, without any feeling of shame or regret, and without any other emotion than a tranquil joy, the occurrences of the three months which had just passed. Claire and Mme. Auvray wept while they listened. The doctor acted as if he were taking notes or writing from dictation, but something else than ink fell upon the paper. When the tale was told the convalescent added, by way of conclusion :

" To-day, the 25th of December, at three o'clock in the afternoon, I say to my excellent doctor, to my beloved father, M. Auvray, whose street and number I shall never forget again, ' Monsieur, you have a daughter, Mlle. Claire Auvray ; I saw her last summer at the Ems Springs with her mother ; I love her ; she has given me abundant proof that she loves me, and if you are not afraid that I will get sick again, I have the honour to ask you for her hand.' "

The doctor only made a little motion of the head, but Claire passed her arm around the convalescent's neck, and kissed him on the forehead. I care for no other reply when I make a similar demand.

The same day, M. Morlot, calmer and freed from the strait-jacket, got up at eight in the morning. On getting out of bed, he took his slippers, turned them over and over, shook them carefully, and passed them to the nurse, begging him to see if they did not contain thirty thousand francs income. Not till then would he consent to put them on. He combed himself for a good quarter of an hour, repeating, " I don't want anybody to say that my nephew's fortune has got into my head." He shook each of his garments out of the window, after

examining it down to its smallest wrinkle. As soon as he was dressed, he asked for a pencil, and wrote on the wall of his chamber :

“ COVET NOT THAT WHICH IS ANOTHER’S.”

Then he commenced to rub his hands with incredible energy to satisfy himself that François’s fortune was not sticking to them. He scraped his fingers with his pencil, counting them from one up to ten, for fear that he should forget one. He thought he was in a police court, and earnestly demanded to be searched. The doctor got him to recognise him, and told him that François was cured. The poor man asked if the money had been found. “ As my nephew is going to leave here,” he said, “ he’ll need his money ; where is it ? I haven’t got it, unless it’s in my bed.” And before any one had time to prevent him, he pulled his bed topsy-turvy. The doctor went out after pressing his hand. He rubbed this hand with scrupulous care. They brought him his breakfast ; he commenced by examining his napkin, his glass, his knife, his plate, repeating that he did not want to eat up his nephew’s fortune. The repast over, he washed his hands in enormous quantities of water. “ The fork is silver,” said he ; “ perhaps there’s some silver sticking to my hands ! ”

M. Auvray does not despair of saving him, but it will take time. Summer and autumn are the seasons in which doctors are most successful with insanity.

GUSTAVE DROZ
1882-1895

THE SEMPSTRESS'S STORY

“ **Y**ES, Ma'm'selle Adèle,” said the sempstress, “ the real happiness of this world is not so unequally distributed after all.” Louise, as she said this, took from the reserve in the bosom of her dress a lot of pins, and applied them deftly to the trimming of a skirt which I was holding for her.

“ A sufficiently comfortable doctrine,” I answered, “ but it does seem to me as if some people were born to live and to die unhappy.”

“ It is only folks who never find anybody to love enough ; and I think it's nobody's fault but their own.”

“ But, my good Louise, wouldn't you have suffered much less last year, when you came so near losing your boy, if you hadn't cared so much for him ? ”

I was only drawing her on, you see : Louise's chat was the greatest resource to me at that time.

“ Why, Ma'm'selle Adèle, you are surely joking. You'd as well tell me to cut off my feet to save my shoes. You'll know one of these days—and not so far off neither, maybe—how mighty easy and sensible it would be not to love your children. They *are* a worry, too ; but oh, the delight of 'em ! I'd like to have had anybody tell me not to love my darling because it might grieve me, when he lay there in his mother's lap, with blue lips, gasping for his breath, and well-nigh dead ; his face blackish, and his hands like this piece of wax. You could see that everything was going against him ; and with his great big eyes he was staring in my face, until I felt as if the child was tugging at my very heart-strings.

“ I kept smiling at him, though, through the tears that blinded me, hard as I tried to hide them. Oh ! such tears are bitter salt indeed, ma'm'selle ! And there was my poor husband on his knees, making paper figures to amuse him, and singing a funny song he used to laugh at. Now and then the corners of his mouth would pucker, and his cheeks would wrinkle a little bit under the eyes. You could tell he was still amused, but in such a dreamy way. Oh ! our child seemed

no longer with us, but behind a veil, like. Wait a minute. You must excuse me, for I can't help crying when I think of it."

And the poor creature drew out her handkerchief and fairly sobbed aloud. In the midst of it, however, she smiled and said, "Well, that's over now; 'twas nothing, and I'm too silly. And, ma'm'selle, here I've gone and cried upon your mother's dress, and that's a pretty business."

I took her hand in mine and pressed it.

"Aren't you afraid you'll stick yourself, ma'm'selle? I've got my needle in that hand," she said playfully. "But you did not mean what you said just now, did you?"

"What did I say?"

"That it would be better not to love your children with all your heart, on account of the great anxiety. Don't you know such thoughts are wicked? When they come into your head your mind wants purifying. But I'm sure I beg your pardon for saying so."

"You are entirely right, Louise," I returned.

"Ah! so I thought. And now, let me see. Let's fix this ruche; pull it to the left a little, please."

"But about the sick boy. Tell me about his recovery."

"That was a miracle—I ought to say two miracles. It was a miracle that God restored him to us, and a miracle to find anybody with so much knowledge and feeling—such talent. Such a tender heart, and so much, so much!—I'm speaking of the doctor. A famous one he was, too, you must know; for it was no less than Doctor Faron. Heaven knows how he is run after; and how rich and celebrated he is! Aren't you surprised to hear that it was he who attended *our* little boy? Indeed, the wonders begin with that. You may imagine my husband was at his wits' end when he saw how it was with the child; and all of a sudden I saw him jump up, get out his best coat and hat, and put them on.

"'Where are you going?' I asked.

"'To bring Doctor Faron.'

"Why, if he had said, 'To bring the Prime Minister,' it would have seemed as likely.

"Don't you believe Doctor Faron is going to trouble himself about the likes of us. They will turn you out of doors.'

"But 'twas no use talking, my dear. He was already on the stairs,

and I heard him running away as if the house was on fire. Fire, indeed ; worse, far worse than any fire !

" And there I was, left alone with the child upon my knees. He wouldn't stay in bed ; and was quieter so, wrapped up in his little blanket. Here will he die, I thought. Soon will his eyes close, and then it will be all over ; and I held my own breath to listen to his feeble and oppressed pantings.

" About an hour had passed, when I heard a rapid step on the stairs—(we are poor, and live in the attic). The door opened, and my husband came in, wet with perspiration and out of breath. If I live a century I'll not forget his look when he said :

" ' Well ? '

" I answered, ' No worse. But the doctor ? '

" ' He's coming.'

" Oh ! those blessed words ! It actually seemed as if my child were saved already. If you but knew how folks love their little ones. I kissed the darling, I kissed his father, I laughed, I cried, and I no longer felt the faintest doubt. It is by God's mercy that such gleams of hope are sent to strengthen us in our trials. It was very foolish, too ; for something might easily have prevented the doctor's coming, after all.

" ' You found him at home, then ? ' I inquired of my husband.

" Then he told me, in an undertone, what he had done, stopping every now and then to wipe his face and gather breath :

" ' I ran to the Children's Hospital, which he manages, hoping to find him there. The porter showed me a low door at the end of the courtyard. I knocked and was let into a room full of young fellows, all smoking, talking and laughing away at a great rate.'

" Ah ! the wretches ! and with dying folks all round 'em."

" Don't say that until you know all. ' What do you want here, friend ? ' says a tall one in a white apron and black sleeves, and who, seeing my troubled looks, took me on one side. ' What's the matter ? '

" ' I'm sorry to trouble you, sir,' I began.

" ' No ceremony, man. Speak out.'

" ' I'm looking for Doctor Faron, to come and save my child, sir. He's dying with croup. I'm not rich, but all I can raise I will give.'

" ' Oh ! that's all right,' says he. ' How old's the child.'

" ' Four years old, sir.'

" ' Who's been attending it ? '

“ ‘ A doctor who gives him little white pills in a heap of water, sir.’

“ ‘ Ah ! hah ! ’ says he, smiling ; ‘ well, don’t be downhearted,’ and with that he threw off his apron and black sleeves, and wrote something on a bit of paper.

“ ‘ Take this to Doctor Faron. That’s his address. Where do you live ? I’ll come when I get my coat on.’

“ ‘ Oh ! how kind, sir ! ’

“ I could have hugged him. But he said, ‘ Come, no nonsense, friend. Away with you ! ’ So I hurried off to Doctor Faron’s house, with the note ; but he was dining out.

“ ‘ Where ? ’ I asked, as the servant held the door ajar.

“ ‘ Don’t know,’ says he, very short ; and shut the door in my face.

“ At that I got angry, and it seemed to me the child came before my eyes. I pushed open the door, and in I went.

“ ‘ That won’t do,’ I said. ‘ One of the hospital doctors sent me here, and I *must* know where to find your master, and quick, too.’

“ Seeing that I wouldn’t stand trifling, he gave me the direction, and growled, ‘ Now clear out, and shut that door.’

“ So I rushed away to the Rue de Lille. The courtyard was full of carriages, and the windows all in a blaze of light ; but in I went, for all that.

“ ‘ My boy will die !—my boy will die ! ’ I kept repeating, as I elbowed through the people. An old servant stopped me in the ante-chamber. ‘ Where now ? ’ says he.

“ ‘ I want to speak to Doctor Faron,’ says I ; ‘ I *must* speak to him. Get him to come out here, won’t you, please ? ’

“ The old fellow looked at me hard, and then said very kindly, ‘ Sit down there an instant, and I’ll try.’

“ What possessed me to sit there and cry, with all those servants hurrying about with plates and dishes, I can’t tell ; but I couldn’t help it.

“ In a minute or so, here comes a large gentleman with a white cravat on. ‘ Where’s the man that wants me ? ’ he asks in a gruff voice. Then seeing me there in the corner in such a state, with a searching look at me, he took the note, read it, and said quietly, ‘ Ah ! the noble boy.’ Then, turning to me, ‘ Go home, my man ; I’ll be there directly. Cheer up ; I’ll lose no time.’ ”

“ My husband had scarcely uttered these words,” continued Louise,

" when I heard a step on the stairs. It was he ! it was that blessed angel of a doctor come to help us in our sore distress.

" And what do you think he said in his deep voice when he got into the room ?

" ' God bless you, my friends, but I nearly broke my neck on those stairs. Where's that child ? '

" ' Here he is, my dear, darling doctor.' I knew no better way to speak to him, with his dress-cravat showing over his great-coat, and his decorations dangling like a little bunch of keys at his buttonhole.

" He took off his wrappings, stooped over the child, turned him over, more gently even than his mother could have done, and laid his own head first against his back, then against his breast. How I tried to read his eyes ! but they know how to hide their thoughts.

" ' We must perform an operation here,' says he ; ' and it is high time.'

" Just at this moment the hospital doctor came in, and whispered to him, ' I am afraid you didn't want to be disturbed, sir.'

" ' Oh, never mind. I am sorry it wasn't sooner, though. Get everything ready now.'

" But, Ma'm'selle Adèle, why should I tell you all this ? I'd better mind my work."

" Oh ! go on, Louise, go on ! "

" Well, then, ma'm'selle, if you believe me, those two doctors—neither of 'em kin, or even friends till then—went to work and made all the preparations, while my husband went off to borrow lights. The biggest one tied a mattress on the table, and the assistant spread out the bright little knives.

" You, who have not been through it all, ma'm'selle, can't know what it is to have your own little one in your lap, to know that those things are to be used upon him, to pierce his tender flesh, and, if the hand that guides them be not sure, that they may kill him.

" When all was ready, Doctor Faron took off his cravat, then lifted my child from my arms and laid him on the mattress, in the midst of the lamps, and said to my poor man :

" ' You will hold his head, and your wife his feet. Joseph will pass me the instruments. You've brought a breathing tube with you, my son ? '

" ' Yes, sir.'

" My husband was as white as a sheet by this ; and when I saw

him about to take his place with his hands shaking so much, it scared me, so I said :

“ ‘ Doctor, please let me hold his head ! ’

“ ‘ But, my poor woman, if you should tremble ? ’

“ ‘ Please let me do it, doctor ! ’

“ ‘ Be it so then,’ and then added, with a bright look at me, and a cheering smile, ‘ We shall save him for you, my dear ; you are a brave little woman, and you deserve it.’

“ Yes, and save him, did he ! God bless him ! saved him as truly as if he had snatched him from the depths of the river.”

“ And you didn’t tremble, Louise ? ”

“ You may depend on that. If I had, it would have been the last of my child.”

“ How in the world did you keep yourself steady ? ”

“ The Lord knows ; but I was like a rock. When you must, you must, I suppose.”

“ And you had to behold every detail of that operation ? ”

“ Yes, indeed ; and often have I dreamed it over since. His poor little neck laid open, and the veins, which the doctor pushed aside with his fingers and the little silver tube which he inserted, and all that ; and then the face of the child, changing as the air passed into his lungs. You’ve seen a lamp almost out, when you pour in oil ? It was like that. They had laid him there but half alive, with his eyes all but set ; and they gave him back to me, pale and with bloodless lips, it is true, but with life in his looks, and breathing—breathing the free, fresh air.

“ ‘ Kiss him, mother,’ says the doctor, ‘ and put him to bed. Cover the place with some light thing or other, and Joseph must stay with you to-night ; won’t you, Joseph ? Ah, well, that’s all arranged.’

“ He put on his things and wrapped himself up to go. He was shaking hands with my husband, when I seized one hand, and kissed it—like a fool, as I was—but I didn’t stop to think. He laughed heartily, and said to my husband, ‘ Are you not jealous, friend ? Your wife is making great advances to me. But I must be off now. Good-night, good people.’

“ And from that night he always talks so friendly to us, not a bit contemptuously either, but as if he liked us, and was glad to be of service to us.

“ The next morning, at half-past five, there he was, as fresh as a rose, and larger, as it seemed to me, than before. And no wonder, neither,

for don't you think he had brought four bottles of old Bordeaux ! two in his pockets and two under his arms.

“ ‘ The little fellow must take this,’ says he. ‘ Everything gone on well in the night, eh ? ’

“ ‘ Admirably well, sir,’ answered Mr. Joseph. I call him Mr. Joseph, but I have since found out that he was a rising physician, nephew to the old doctor, and 'way above the common run. But he always spoke to the other like a soldier to his general.

“ Well, that's not all the doctor did ; for during the entire week after he came every day, and when I would hear his carriage rumbling over our poor little street, I would say, ‘ Heaven knows what we shall ever do to pay him.’ For we well knew that Doctor Faron attended dukes and noblemen, and charged them by the thousand.

“ We had some hundred francs in the Savings, to be sure, but I was thinking what we should do if he charged two or three times as much. You can understand how very awkward it would have been. It fairly made me sick.

“ At last, one morning when my husband was at home, I mustered up all my courage and began :

“ ‘ Doctor Faron, you have been so good, too good to us. You have saved our boy's life.’

“ ‘ You may prate over that just as much as you please, my dear ; but recollect it is my trade to cut up such little chaps.’

“ ‘ But not those who live on the fifth floor in the Rue Serpente, sir.’

“ You see, ma'm'selle, how I was leading up to the question ?

“ ‘ How's that ? how's that ? Why, what are you talking about ? Those before anybody else, to be sure. Are they not most in need ? ’

“ ‘ I know you have the best heart in the world, doctor ; but that's not what I mean. Now, that the child is well, we want to—we are not rich—but still——’

“ By this time I was as red as a cock's comb, and the more I tried to express myself the worse it got.

“ ‘ You want to pay me. I see, I see,’ said he suddenly. ‘ Well, you owe me precisely nothing, if you don't think that too much.’

“ ‘ Oh ! doctor ! we couldn't—we must——’

“ ‘ Let us pay according to our means, doctor,’ says my husband.

“ ‘ Well, then, I don't want to wound you, my friends. If you prefer to pay something, my charge is just fifty francs. And now don't bother me any more about it. (He pretended to be angry, and

it was so droll.) Don't bother me, I say, you lunatics. Fifty francs, I tell you, and not a copper less ; in specie, too ; no paper money for me. Next Sunday dress the little man, and have him ready ; for I wish him to take a turn in the Bois de Boulogne.'

" ' Ah ! there's no end to your kindness, doctor.'

" ' Don't interrupt me, I say. After his drive, bring him to see me ; and let him fetch the money himself. Do you hear ? '

" Well, ma'm'selle," added Louise, " that very evening here comes a basket of wine, although we hadn't finished the other. What a man ! you may well say. And I declare to you, if he had wanted my right arm, I should have said, ' Cut it off, sir.'

" Fifty francs, indeed ! It wasn't the twentieth of what we owed him ; and he only took that to save our feelings. And seeing this, I was still more anxious to please him ; so I bought some linen, the finest I could get, and didn't I make him an elegant set of shirts ! "

" Why, how did you get his measure ? "

" Ah ! that *was* hard ; but when I make up my mind nothing stops me. I went to his valet—who knew me, because he had brought the wine—and I told him the doctor wanted me to look over his linen in the wash. So I got to the laundress, and I made her think he had ordered some shirts like those she had in hand, and so I got the pattern.

" I was full of work at that time, but I made all those shirts at night ; and it gave me such satisfaction to think, ' Ah ! you won't let us pay you—you obstinate man—but you can't prevent my sitting up and working for you the livelong night ; and the way I worked ! you should have seen me at it !

" You may depend on it there was plenty of hem-stitching on those shirts, and you know when I try I *can* hem-stitch.

" But I am trifling away my time, and this dress will never be done."

ANDRÉ THEURIET
1838-1907

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY

WHEN the train left the station of Sisteron, the artist, Esprit Capdenave, saw that all the travellers in his second-class compartment had got out, with the exception of a girl who occupied the corner opposite to his. Capdenave had got in at Pertuis at dawn, and, at once snuggled down in his corner, had continued the sleep interrupted by his sudden early departure. Now he rubbed his eyes, shook himself, and, cheered by a ray of sunlight, resumed possession of his faculties of observation. Like himself, the girl opposite had just opened her sleepy eyes. She freed herself from a shawl of thick black lace, tidied her fair scattered hair, and with the help of a pocket-mirror did her best to smarten herself up.

She seemed to be about twenty-four ; fresh, healthy, plump, she had fine flower-blue eyes and a little beauty-spot of a mole on her upper lip. The artist remarked with pleasure her slim waist, her enticing rounded bosom, and her finely-moulded hands in cotton gloves. While he slyly examined her, he saw her search in her travelling-bag and take out a roll. She hoped no doubt to find something more appetising than dry bread ; for, after upsetting the contents of the bag, she gave a little disillusioned pout.

Seeing this, Esprit, obeying an impulse of compassion, opened his own bag, displayed a tablet of chocolate still wrapped in silver paper, and gallantly presented it to the young lady, saying, " Madame . . . or Mademoiselle . . . "

" Mademoiselle," she replied, a little astonished. A smile of good-nature played over the lips of the artist, and was lost in his short curly beard.

" Very well, Mademoiselle," he continued, " permit me to offer you a little chocolate to replace that which you have forgotten."

The girl, after a moment's hesitation, accepted it with thanks, and proposed to give in exchange half her roll. They both began to eat with a good appetite, while the train steamed along the Buech Valley. While crunching, they looked out of the window at the mountains

fading, one over the other, in the distance ; the terraced orchards, all snowy with flowering plum and cherry trees ; and, here and there on slopes watered by gleaming brooks, the young grass of the meadows starred with white narcissi.

The frugal repast in common broke the ice. They became more communicative. Esprit Capdenave, with a view to gaining the confidence of his fellow-traveller, told her his age, his profession, and his business. He came from Saint Raphael and was going to Grenoble, where he had a commission for some portraits—the whole of a family of glove-makers, ugly as sin, but possessing money and paying well. With exuberant gestures, the blarney of the Southerner, and a droll gift of pantomime, he gave a jesting description of his future models. The girl laughed heartily, and became more and more friendly.

“ So you paint portraits ? ” she asked.

“ At your service, Mademoiselle. What is your Christian name ? ”

“ Louise.”

“ Well, Mademoiselle Louise, if you will only stop two days at Grenoble, I will paint your portrait with the greatest pleasure. My word ! That would be an agreeable relief from my family of glove-makers ! ”

“ Thank you,” she said with a blush, “ but I am not going so far. I am getting out at Monestier de Clermont.”

Then she told him the story of her life. She was a governess at Aix, in a magistrate's family. Orphan, she had no other relations than an aunt and uncle living at Monestier, who had arranged a marriage between her and a well-to-do trader of the town, a widower without children, who was called Léchaudel. She was profiting by her Easter holidays to visit her relations, and meet at their house this Monsieur Léchaudel, of whom she had only seen a photograph.

“ He is rather old for me,” she added frankly, “ and he seems to have a very ordinary appearance. But I am tired of being under others. It is so sad to live alone, without the slightest sign of affection. Provided that this gentleman is not very displeasing, I think I shall accept him.”

While making this confidence, she sighed, and her red soft lips half opened, discovering the whiteness of her teeth. At the same time, Esprit observed in the blue pupils of the girl that humid, brilliant languor particular to the eyes of women tormented by the need for love. This humid gleam of her glance, this red mouth of hers, un-

consciously asking for kisses, her frank confessions of her weary solitude, awoke in him the desire to flirt with her, and made him suddenly wishful to supplant this unknown pretender, to whom the governess was preparing with resignation to yield her alluring youth.

"What!" he cried, "you will not condemn yourself to marry an old ugly shop-keeper, and wall yourself up in a hole of a village! It is not possible! A pretty girl has not the right to sacrifice herself in this way with a light heart. Do not commit this madness, I pray you!"

To strengthen his pleading, he took the hands of the governess, who at first laughed, and let him go on, then little by little, frightened by his prolonged clasp, tried in vain to free her fingers. During this time the train ran over a high tableland, full of floating mist, then came out in full sunlight among the meadow-lands, full of the music of cow-bells. A brisk air blew into the carriage some of the white falling petals of the cherry trees, and this snow of petals carried with it the exciting exhalations of spring-time. Suddenly the train buried itself in the sonorous darkness of a tunnel, and the painter profited by it to use more tender caresses. The girl, in its obscurity, found herself still more agitated, and scarcely defended herself. Esprit was sitting beside her, his arm around her waist, when suddenly they came out into full sunlight.

"Oh! If we should be seen!"

"By whom . . . the birds of the air? Don't trouble about them, and let me love you!"

Again the train entered a tunnel. Louise, scared, felt the invisible lips of her audacious companion placed on her eyes, on her mouth. An anxious and yet sweet emotion came over her. Her head turned, and she resisted more weakly. Happily for her, the glittering daylight reappeared, the train stopped before a little station to the cry of "Clelles! Clelles!"

"My God!" she sighed, recoiling, ashamed, and trembling. "We will soon be to Monestier! Leave me alone, I beg you!"

Still trembling she rose to her feet, took her hat, and hastily did her hair up.

"What matters Monestier!" said Capdenave with passion, taking her again in his arms. "I love you. I cannot leave you, and I must take you with me!"

"You are mad!" she stammered. "Keep quiet."

The train steamed along a wooded slope. Louise half freed herself and leaned from the window. She could already see the sunlit village in the middle of fields and pine woods, with its single long, steep street. Then she could discern the station, isolated in the country, and on the platform three silhouettes, growing more and more distinct, grouped in an attitude of expectation.

"I recognise my aunt and uncle," said the governess. "The gentleman who accompanies them must be Monsieur Léchaudel."

"It is ugly enough for him!" replied Esprit, cunningly getting between the girl and the door.

With an abrupt action he shut the window, and planted himself resolutely before the door, that he hid with his big shoulders.

"No," he affirmed, "I will not let you immolate yourself to such a villain. I love you and I will keep you."

After slowly slackening down, the train stopped dead, and the voice of the guard ran along the carriages: "Monestier de Clermont!" The governess, thinking it was all a joke, took up her bag and umbrella.

"Come, sir, do be serious! Open the door for me."

"Never, on my life!" swore the painter, drawing her to him, and stifling her protestations with kisses.

Outside there could be heard the uncle and aunt, anxiously looking in the carriages and calling, "Louise! Louise!" But they called in vain, and the large back of Capdenave prevented them from seeing their niece.

"They are looking for me! They are calling me!" murmured Louise in tears. "This is unworthy of you! Open the door, sir, I beg you!"

A whistle; the train went on, and the station of Monestier soon disappeared like a dream. Enervated and tired by the useless struggle the governess fell back on the seat. Esprit tried again to encircle her with his arm, but she rejected him in anger, and threw herself at the other end of the carriage. Hiding her face in her hands, she sobbed, suffocating:

"No! it is too much! Go away! I detest you!"

He sat down opposite to her, and sought to console her by tender words. She kept in an attitude of dislike, savagely silent, and thus they reached the station of Vizille. The door opened, and the compartment was filled with travellers who were going to spend the Sunday at Grenoble. This was like a shower-bath on the effervescent Capdenave,

and compelled him to keep silent. The governess in her corner half turned her back on him, and looked at the door sullenly. Esprit, condemned to remain mute, began to reflect more coolly on the consequences of his escapade, and the responsibility he had assumed. They did not exchange another word, and on reaching Grenoble he silently aided the girl to get down, and took charge of her bag.

Confused, Louise looked at what he did in a sort of stupor, and followed him with the docility of a frightened animal. Outside the station the artist took her arm, and led her to an hotel just opposite. When the waiter took them to a room, and they were alone, Louise sank down on a chair, and was taken with a sudden fit of crying. She wrung her hands desperately, and her breast was shaken with deep sobs.

It was the turn of Esprit to become frightened. He had not expected this explosion of profound grief. Kneeling down by the governess, he tried to quieten her with caresses, but it was labour in vain. The sobs of Louise redoubled, and she rejected him with horror.

"Go away!" she moaned. "If you have any feeling at all, do not do anything more. Ah! God! God! What a misfortune! My relatives will write to Aix, and the people there will have a fine opinion of me. I shall be shamefully dismissed and be without a situation. All that through your fault. Because you have treated me as if I were a bad woman, and now I am lost! lost! . . ."

Her tears flowed again. Esprit, upset with himself, thought, "Yet she is right, and I have acted like a blackguard!" He was not a bad fellow, and though he was not remarkable for the austerity of his manners, he was no wise inclined to compromise a woman against her will. It hurt him to think he had done any wrong to this pretty weeping creature. He saw she was absolutely sincere, and this sincerity awoke in him the beginnings of remorse. He suddenly seized the hands of the governess.

"Forgive me," he said humbly, "and do not upset yourself so, Mademoiselle Louise. I will lead you back to the station. You can take the first train starting for Monestier; and you can make things all right by telling your people that you fell asleep and did not wake up till you got to Grenoble. Dry your eyes. I am a terrible fool, but I am also a decent man."

Thereupon he led her back to the station. A train was just about to start in the direction of Monestier. Capdenave got a ticket, and put

the governess in a carriage, with some sweets and fruit and cakes. Now that she felt that she was saved, Louise was quite recovered. Her flower-blue eyes shone with a humid brilliance, and her soft red lips formed a malicious smile to thank the artist when he shut the door of the carriage.

Capdenave looked at the train, rolling away with its long plume of steam.

“ What a pity ! ” he sighed, sorrowful ; “ she will marry Monsieur Léchaudel. . . . What a pity ! ”

LA BRETONNE

ANDRÉ THEURIET

ONE November evening, the eve of Saint Catherine's Day, the gate of the Auberive prison turned upon its hinges to allow to pass out a woman of some thirty years, clad in a faded woollen gown and coiffed in a linen cap that framed in a singular fashion a face pale and puffed by that sickly-hued fat which develops on prison regimen. She was a prisoner whom they had just liberated, and whom her companions of detention called La Bretonne.

Condemned for infanticide, it was exactly, day for day, six years ago that the prison van had brought her to the Centrale. Now, in her former garb, and with her small stock of money received from the clerk in her pocket, she found herself free and with her road-pass stamped for Langres.

The courier for Langres, however, had long since gone. Cowed and awkward, she took her way stumblingly toward the chief inn of the borough, and with trembling voice asked shelter for the night. But the inn was crowded, and the landlady, who did not care to harbour "one of those birds from over yonder," counselled her to push on to the tavern at the far end of the village.

La Bretonne passed on, and, more trembling and awkward than ever, knocked at the door of that tavern, which, properly speaking, was but a dram-shop for labourers. The proprietor also eyed her askance, scenting doubtless a "discharged" from the Centrale, and finally refused her on the plea that there was no bed to give her.

La Bretonne dared not insist, but with bowed head pursued her way, while at the bottom of her soul rose and grew a dull hatred for that world which thus repulsed her.

She had no other resource than to gain Langres afoot.

Towards the end of November, night comes quickly. Soon she found herself enveloped in darkness, on a greyish road that ran between two divisions of the forest, and where the north wind whistled fiercely, choked her with dust, and pelted her with dead leaves.

After six years of sedentary and recluse life her legs were stiff,

the muscles knotted, and her feet, accustomed to sabots, pinched and bruised by her new slippers. At the end of a league she felt them blistered and herself exhausted. She dropped upon a pile of stones by the wayside, shivering and asking herself if she was going to be forced to perish of cold and hunger in this black night, under this icy breeze, which froze her to the marrow.

All at once, in the solitude of the road, she seemed to hear the droning notes of a voice singing. She listened and distinguished the air of one of those caressing and monotonous chants with which one soothes young children.

She was not alone, then !

She struggled to her feet and in the direction from which the voice came, and there, at the turn of a cross-road, perceived a reddish light streaming through the branches. Five minutes later she was before a mud-walled hovel, whose roof, covered by squares of sod, leaned against the rock, and whose window had allowed to pass that beckoning ray.

With anxious heart she decided to knock.

The chant ceased instantly and a woman opened the door, a peasant woman, no older than La Bretonne herself, but faded and aged by work. Her bodice, torn in places, displayed the skin tanned and dirty ; her red hair escaped dishevelled from under a soiled stuff cap, and her grey eyes regarded with amazement the stranger whose face had in it something of touching loneliness.

" Good evening ! " said she, lifting yet higher the sputtering lamp in her hand ; " what do you desire ? "

" I am unable to go on," murmured La Bretonne, in a voice broken by a sob ; " the city is far, and if you will lodge me for the night, you will do me a service. . . . I have money ; I will pay you for the trouble."

" Enter," replied the other, after a moment's hesitancy ; " but why," continued she, in a tone more curious than suspicious, " did you not sleep at Auberive ? "

" They would not give me a lodging," lowering her blue eyes and taken with a sudden scruple, " be—because, see you, I come from the Maison Centrale."

" So ! the Maison Centrale ! but no matter—enter—I fear nothing, having known only misery. Moreover, I've a conscience against turning a Christian from the door on a night like this. I'll give you a bed and a slice of cheese."

And she pulled from the eaves some bundles of dried heather and spread them as a pallet in the corner by the fire.

"Do you live here alone?" demanded La Bretonne timidly.

"Yes, with my kiddie, going on seven years now. I earn our living by working in the wood."

"Your man, then, is dead?"

"Yes," said the other brusquely, "the kiddie has no father. Briefly, to each his sorrow! But come, behold your straw, and two or three potatoes left from supper. It is all I can offer you——"

She was called by a childish voice coming from a dark nook, separated from the room by a board partition.

"Good-night!" she repeated, "the little one cries; I must go, but sleep you well!"

And taking up the lamp she passed into the closet, leaving La Bretonne crouched alone in the darkness.

Stretched upon her heather, after she had eaten her supper, she strove to close her eyes, but sleep would not come to her. Through the thin partition she heard the mother still softly talking to the child, whom the arrival of a stranger had wakened, and who did not wish to go to sleep again.

The mother soothed and fondled the child with words of endearment that somehow strangely disturbed La Bretonne. That outburst of simple tenderness seemed to waken a confused maternal instinct in the soul of that girl condemned in the past for having stifled her new-born.

"If things had not gone so badly with me," thought La Bretonne sorrowfully, "*it* would have been the same age as this little one here."

At that thought and at the sound of that childish voice a sickening shudder seemed to shake her very vitals; something soft and tender to spring up in that soured heart, and an increasing need for the relief of tears.

"But come, come, my little one," the mother cried, "to sleep you must go! And if you are good and do as I say, to-morrow I'll take you to the Saint Catherine's Fair!"

"The feast-day of little children, mamma; the feast-day of little children, you mean?"

"Yes, my angel, of little children."

"And the day when the good Saint Catherine brings playthings to the babies, mamma?"

"Sometimes—yes."

"Then why doesn't she bring playthings to our house, mamma?"

"We live too far away, perhaps; and then—we are too poor."

"She brings them only to rich babies, then, mamma? But why, mamma, why, I say? I should love to see playthings!"

"Very well! some day you may, if you are very good—to-night, perhaps, if you are good and go to sleep soon."

"I will, then, mamma, I will go to sleep now, so she can bring them to-morrow."

The little voice ceased; there was a long silence; then a long breath, even and light!

The child slept at last—the mother also.

La Bretonne, only, did not sleep! An emotion, at once poignant and tender, tore at her heart, and she thought more than ever of that other little one, whom they said she had killed. . . . This lasted till dawn.

Mother and child slept still, but La Bretonne was up and out, gliding hurriedly and furtively in the direction of Auberive and slackening her pace only when the first houses of the village came in sight.

Soon she had reached and was traversing its only street, walking slowly now and scanning with all her eyes the signs of the shops. One at last seemed to fix her attention. She knocked at the shutter and presently it opened. A mercer's shop, apparently, but also with some toys and playthings in the window—poor, pitiful trifles, a pasteboard doll, a Noah's ark, a woolly, stiff-legged little sheep!

To the astonishment of the merchant, La Bretonne purchased them all, paid, and went out. She had resumed the road to the hovel in the wood, when suddenly a hand fell heavily upon her shoulder, and she was face to face with a brigadier of police.

The unhappy one had forgotten that it was forbidden to liberated prisoners to loiter near the Maison Centrale.

"Instead of vagabondising here, you should already be at Langres," said the brigadier gruffly. "Come, march, be off with you! To the road, to the road, I say!"

She sought to explain. Pains lost. At once a passing cart was pressed into service, La Bretonne bundled into it, and in charge of a policeman once more en route for Langres.

The cart jolted lumberingly over the frozen ruts. The poor La Bretonne clutched with a heart-broken air her bundle of playthings in her freezing fingers.

All at once, at a turn of the road, she recognised the cross-path that led through the wood. Her heart leaped and she besought the policeman to stop only one moment. She had a commission for La Fleuriotte, the woman that lived there !

She supplicated with so much fervour that the man, a good fellow at heart, allowed himself to be persuaded. They stopped, tied the horse to a tree, and ascended the pathway.

Before the door La Fleuriotte hewed the gathered wood into the required fagots. On seeing her visitor return, accompanied by a policeman, she stood open-mouthed and with arms hanging.

" Hush ! " said La Bretonne, " hush ! the little one—does it sleep still ? "

" Yes—but——"

" Then, here, these playthings, lay them on the bed and tell her Saint Catherine brought them. I returned to Auberive for them ; but it seems I had no right to do it, and they are taking me now to Langres."

" Holy Mother of God ! " cried the amazed La Fleuriotte.

" Hush ! be still, I say ! "

And drawing near the bed herself, followed always by her escort, La Bretonne scattered upon the coverlet the doll, the Noah's ark, and the stiff-legged, woolly, and somewhat grimy little lamb, bent the bare arm of the child till it clasped the latter, then turned with a smile.

" Now," said she, addressing the policeman, vigorously rubbing his eyes with the cuff of his jacket—the frost, it seemed, had gotten into them—" I am ready : we can go ! "

LUDOVIC HALÉVY
1884-1908

THE GRAND MARRIAGE

Nov. 25th, 1893. 4 o'clock.

THIS morning at ten o'clock I was just settling down to attack Beethoven's Twenty-fifth Symphony, when the door opened, and who should walk in but mamma. Mamma awake and stirring at ten o'clock! And not only awake and stirring, but dressed and ready to go out—mantled and bonneted.

I could not remember ever to have seen her stirring so early before. She never manages to get to church on Sunday before the middle of the one o'clock mass. The other evening she said, laughingly, to Abbé Pontal:

"Monsieur l'Abbé, our dear religion would be absolutely perfect if you substituted a mass at two for that at one. Then the concerts at the Conservatoire could be put an hour later, and Sunday in winter would be all that could be desired."

At mamma's entrance I was stupefied, and exclaimed, "You are going out, mamma?"

"No, I've just come in."

"You've just come in?"

"Yes, I had something to do this morning—to choose some stuffs for the hangings—that blue, you know, which is so difficult to find."

"Have you found it?"

"No—no. But they say they can get it for me—and I hope that—— They are going to send it by the day after to-morrow at the latest."

Mamma got quite confused in her explanation. She finally announced that we were going to an evening party at the Mercereys'. There was to be a little music. She had known of it for several days, but had forgotten to mention it to me before. I didn't show the slightest sign of surprise, but while listening to mamma, I studied her carefully, and thought to myself, "What's the meaning of all this? Mamma rambling about at this unearthly hour, matching

blues ! A *soirée musicale* at the Mercereys' ! Mamma evidently confused, too ! There's something hidden."

So I let her flounder and never uttered a sound. When she had finished she took a few steps toward the door, just as actors do in a theatre when they pretend they are going out, then she turned back and tried to say with an air of indifference, as if the thought had only just occurred to her, "Which gown do you think of putting on to-night ?"

"To-night, mamma ? Really, I don't know. I might put the grey on—or the blue—or the rose."

"No, no ; not the rose. Put the blue on. You looked quite nice in it the day before yesterday at Aunt Clarice's. Besides, your papa doesn't like the rose, and as he is going with us to the Mercereys'——"

Papa going to the Mercereys' ! "

"Yes, certainly."

"Does he know there's to be some music ?"

"Yes."

"He knows—and yet he is going ?"

"Yes. What is there surprising in that ?"

"Oh, nothing, mamma ; nothing at all."

Whereupon she really left the room, and I was quite alone. Then, without a moment's hesitation, I said to myself, "A marriage is in the air. They're going to show me off to some one. *That's* why papa is obliged to go."

Fancy papa letting himself be dragged by mamma to a *soirée musicale* ! The whole world will seem topsy-turvy. There are only three places which he finds tolerable in the evening—the club, the opera during the ballet, and the little theatres where people go to laugh and amuse themselves generally—the theatres where young girls are not allowed to go, but where I intend to go when I am married.

Yes, I'm sure there's an interview in the wind. It must be something of great importance, for mamma has been in a state of the highest excitement ever since this morning. She ate no breakfast, and didn't manage to conceal her unrest at all. Not only has she inspected my blue dress carefully, but she has also examined me with equal thoroughness. She fell into a fit of veritable despair on verifying the fact that there was a slight flaw on my features.

"What's that ?" she cried.

"Where ? What ? Mamma !"

" On the tip of your nose."

" Have I anything on the tip of my nose ? "

" Yes, a horrid gash."

" Oh, good gracious ! A gash ? "

Quite horrified, I rushed to the mirror. Then I breathed freely again. It was the merest trifle—where the kitten had given me a pat with its paw. Nothing worth mentioning—a little reddish mark that was hardly visible to the naked eye, and which could easily be got rid of before evening.

But in mamma's solicitous eyes the little mark assumed the proportions of a disfiguring wound. The tip of my nose has never received so much touching attention before. Mamma made me sit still in an arm-chair during half of the day, with cold-water cloths fixed like a pair of goggles on the tip of the afore-mentioned nose.

Poor mamma ! She's so anxious to see me married. It's quite natural, after all. She looks very well herself yet in the evening, and it is awkward to have to drag a big marriageable daughter around her heels.

I don't like it, either, for that matter. I know that I make her look older, and, therefore, as soon as we enter a room in the evening I slip away from her, and try to see as little as possible of her afterward until the carriage is announced. So each goes her own way, and interferes as little as possible with the other.

She's a dear, good old soul. There are mothers who simply bully their daughters, and worry them into marrying at five minutes' notice. Quite a leap in the dark. Mamma isn't one of them.

Besides, she knows I have made up my mind not to be hurried—and not to decide carelessly. Marriage is not a trifling thing. If a mistake is made it is for life ; so it's well to know what one is doing when one takes the plunge. When I get married it will be in all seriousness. I don't intend to tumble head over ears in love with the first newcomer, fair or dark, who says to his mother, "I've found the girl of my choice. I love her, and her alone. I'll have her or nobody."

Oh, no ! I'm not going into that stupidity. I intend to keep my eyes open, and my wits about me.

Last spring I declined five very likely wooers simply because none of them offered all the advantages of birth, fortune, and position which I consider I am justified in demanding.

I shall follow the same course of action during the winter campaign—

the same calm prudence. I am not yet twenty, so I can afford to wait.

Since this morning I have felt highly satisfied with myself—*very* highly satisfied. I have not been in the least affected by mother's open agitation. To-day, as usual, I have glanced through my notes.

On my eighteenth birthday I find I wrote the following simple words on the first page of my notebook, which I still keep carefully under lock and key :

MY MARRIAGE.

"And so five have bitten the dust already." I'm sure there'll be a sixth combatant in the lists to-night. Is he the one who will finally become my very humble and very obedient servant and lord ?

In any case, he had better get ready to undergo the most rigorous and searching examination.

I'm not like mamma. I don't lose *my* head.

Nov. 26th. Four o'clock.

I wasn't mistaken. It *was* the sixth.

But let me be orderly, and write the events, both small and great, in their due sequence.

After dinner mamma and I went upstairs to dress. I took a long time over it, and was very careful, too. I may as well tell the truth. I worked at my toilet. It took me an hour and a half to dress to my own complete satisfaction. On coming downstairs I found all the doors open, and as I noiselessly approached the drawing-room I heard papa and mamma talking. Papa said :

"You think it *absolutely* necessary, then ? "

"*Absolutely* necessary. Just think of it. Your presence is indispensable."

The temptation was too great. I stopped to listen. Was it not right, or at least justifiable curiosity on my part ?

"Why indispensable ? " replied papa. "I know the young fellow. I've often met him at the club. I've even played whist with him. He doesn't play badly, either. He saw Irene on horseback, and thought she was superb. That settles the whole affair as far as I am concerned. What business is it of mine ? It's only your affair—yours and Irene's.

"My dear, I assure you that propriety demands——"

"Well, well ; I'll go, I'll go."

Then silence fell. Not another word was spoken. I waited to hear the man's name, but it didn't come. My heart beat a little quicker as I stood there in expectancy—in fact, I distinctly heard its tick-tack. I stood two or three minutes, but as they did not think fit to resume the conversation, I entered, and had to pretend to know nothing.

But I did know something, and that something was of importance, too. He is a member of the Jockey Club. To me that means everything. If I attach too much importance to it, it is papa's fault, for he thinks that any one who is not a member of the Jockey Club is simply nobody. The world, as far as papa is concerned, begins with the Jockey Club, and ends at those who are not of the charmed circle. I have been brought up with those ideas. My husband must be a member of the Jockey Club.

Well, the three of us set off in the landau—papa gloomy, depressed, silent; mamma in the same state of eager excitement; I outwardly cool and indifferent, but thinking hard all the same.

What could be the meaning of so much mystery? This gentleman has seen me on horseback, and had thought I was bewitching, which was very sweet of him. Was it he who had asked to see me in a brilliantly-lighted room—*décolletée*?

That, it seemed to me, was scarcely the correct thing. He ought to have been shown to *me* before I was so liberally shown to him on horseback and on foot. But, after all, it didn't matter much.

We got to the Mercereys' at half-past ten. I was very sorry for papa, for it really was a *soirée musicale*, and there was a quartette, too, which is about the most trying thing in the world for one who does not care for music, and has not been broken in into bearing it. In addition, the music was highly and wearily classical.

There were not many people present—only about a score. The company was very mixed, and it was evident that the affair had been arranged in a hurry, for the people seemed to have been picked up haphazard, with no thought for their peculiarities and idiosyncrasies—nobody knew anybody, and there was an evident lack of sympathy.

We entered just when the andante movement of a sonata was in full swing, and we went on tiptoe to seats. I settled myself snugly in a quiet corner and cast a rapid, furtive glance round the battlefield. At first I only saw a few old men—bored-looking persons—evidently not for me.

Then, in the opposite corner, I noticed a little knot of four young men. There could be no doubt that there was the enemy.

Yes, but which of the four? In my simplicity I thought, "It must be he who is looking at me most devotedly and attentively." I modestly lowered my eyes, and assumed the attitude of a saint listening with inward rapture to the austere strains of a Haydn sonata.

Then suddenly I raised my eyes and let them fall full upon the group of young men. But I had to drop them more quickly than I had raised them, for all the four young men were studying me with an equal amount of curiosity and evident approbation. I let the sonata go a little longer, and again renewed the experiment—with the same result. The four pairs of eyes were fixed unflinchingly upon me.

I don't think I was much put out by so much attention. In fact, I wasn't at all put out. It was pleasant, very pleasant; and I rather liked it than otherwise.

The country did wonders for me last summer. I have grown a little—ever so little—fatter. Virginie, my maid, said to me the other evening while dressing me:

"Ah! Mademoiselle, you don't know how the summer has improved you." In which Virginie was very much mistaken. Mademoiselle *did* know it very well. One always notices such things first one's self.

The quariette at last came to an end, and the usual confusion of tongues followed. I took mamma aside and said:

"Mamma, do point him out."

"Why, you little minx, have you guessed?"

"Yes, I've guessed. Show me him—quick—the music's going to start again."

"That's he—the tall dark man, on the left there—the man standing under the Meissonnier. Don't look just now. He's looking at you."

"He's not the only one. They're all doing that."

"He's not looking now, though. There he is. He's going to papa. He's talking to him."

"He's not bad looking."

"I should rather think he isn't!"

"But his mouth's too large."

"I don't think so."

"Oh, yes it is. But that's a trifle. On the whole, he'll do."

"Oh, if you only knew all—birth, fortune, everything you

could wish for. It was such an extraordinary accident, too—quite romantic.”

“ What’s his name ? ”

“ Comte de Martelle-Simieuse. Don’t look at him ; he’s beginning to look at you again. As I was saying, he is a Martelle-Simieuse, and the Martelle-Simieuses are cousins of the Landry-Simieuses and of the Martelle-Jonzacs. You know the Martelle-Simieuses ? ”

At this point one of the musicians tapped on his desk, and mamma’s flow of genealogical eloquence was stopped. We resumed our seats, and the music began. Mozart this time. I sank back into my corner and settled down to my reflections. It was evident to me that he must be a splendid catch, for mamma was so excited.

Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. Two names. Just what I had dreamt of and longed for. Of course, I should have preferred to be a duchess ; but then there are so few real dukes left—only twenty-two, I believe—so that is practically out of the question. But a countess is passable.

Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. The name would sound well, I thought, and I repeated it several times to convince myself. I paid no attention whatever to Mozart. At first I scarcely realised that the musicians were playing Mozart—it might have been Wagner. All that I knew was that the musicians were playing a melody which seemed to fit in with the words, “ Madame la Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse.”

After all a name *is* a matter of great importance, and particularly a name which goes well with a title. He is titled as well as a member of the Jockey Club. *He* must be titled. I wouldn’t become plain “ Madame ”—no, not for a fabulous fortune. Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. Yes, certainly, that sounded very well.

When the quartette was over the conversation was renewed. Papa turned toward mamma, so did I. As soon as I reached her, she said, excitedly, “ The affair is going splendidly. He has asked to be introduced to you, and papa noticed that his voice trembled—didn’t it ? ”

“ Yes,” replied papa, “ his voice trembled.”

“ Your papa is going to bring him up to introduce him. If you are not satisfied with him, don’t stay at my side. If you are satisfied, stay.”

“ Of course I shall stay, mamma ; but it must be understood that I shall have due time for reflection afterward. You have promised not to hurry me.”

" You will be quite free. But don't forget that it is a chance in a hundred thousand. If you only knew his relatives, and how well they are married. His mother was a Précigny-Laroche. Think of that! A P——"

" Yes, yes. I see."

" There is no better blood than that of the Précigny-Laroches."

" Keep calm, mamma. Don't get so excited. People are looking at you." Then papa fetched him, and we had a nice chat in the interval. It was evident that he was affected. He had had courage to stare at me from a distance, but close at hand he daren't look at me. I had to lead the conversation, and I managed in ten minutes, while chatting apparently about the most trivial topics, to learn all that was absolutely necessary that I should know before letting things go farther.

He loves Paris—so do I. He detests the country—so do I. He thinks Trouville is very amusing—so do I. He doesn't like shooting—nor do I. On the other hand, he is passionately fond of horses and hunting—just as I am. It is well that we agree on that point. How many times have I said to myself, " My husband will have a hunting-seat." He has one. He rents a forest which is only ten leagues from Paris. You leave Paris at half-past eight in the morning from the Gare du Nord—the most convenient of stations—and at half-past ten you are on horseback. And unless the hunt is a very long one, you are back in Paris in the evening for the theatre or a ball.

Then again, his time, his fortune, as well as he himself, are entirely at his own disposal. He has neither father nor mother. He has only a younger brother, who is at present serving in an artillery regiment, and a very rich and very old aunt, who has no children. So he is the head of the family. Martelle-Simieuse belongs to him. It is an estate somewhere out in Vendée. Of course, I have not the remotest idea of going and burying myself out in Vendée for half of the year; but it's quite necessary to have a country-seat, and Vendée is just as good as anywhere else.

All which information I picked up in the short space of ten minutes or a quarter of an hour at the outside. Madame Mercerey, seeing that we were engaged in a serious conversation, lengthened the interval for the benefit of us four—I might say of us three, for papa never uttered a word—might even say of us two, for mamma didn't say much either.

All the information I obtained by skilfully turning the conversa-

tion in the most natural manner, and without asking a single question.

This morning mamma told me that she was absolutely shocked at my calmness and precision last night. Yes, I have a practical side to my nature. I am anxious to place my life in certain unassailable conditions of independence and security, without which there could be neither happiness nor love, nor anything else worth having.

For instance, I'm determined not to have a mother-in-law. I don't know what I wouldn't give *not* to have a mother-in-law. I don't intend to have to quarrel with one. At home a wife should be at home, and only have her husband to deal with.

It was on account of that decision that I rejected the little Marquis de Marillac last year. He was one of the five. I could have loved him ; really, I had already begun to. Then I saw his mother. I stopped.

She was a terrible creature—strict, lugubrious, and ferociously pious. She expected her daughter-in-law to go and bury herself in the depths of Brittany for eight months out of the twelve. Certainly, it would have been a saving—but at what a cost ! What slavery ! Besides, what would be the good of getting married, if, the day after leaving girlhood, the wife had to become a child and go back into leading-strings again the next day ?

Now let me see. Where was I ? I've really quite forgotten. Oh, I remember. The music began again, as I said. It was the last piece. We four sat down in a row in the following order : I, mamma, papa, and he. It was scarcely an hour before that I had first set eyes on him, and we were already quite a little family party, we four, sitting stupidly and stiffly in a straight line on our chairs.

Some short waltzes of Beethoven were played, with intervals of one minute between. During the first interval mother said to me :

" Well, what do you think of him, now that you have seen him ? "

" The same as before, mamma. "

" Is he all right ? "

" He'll do. "

" Then your father may venture to ask him to dinner ? "

" Wouldn't that be hurrying matters rather too much ? "

" We must hurry matters. "

" Why, mamma ? "

" 'Sh ! They're going to begin again. "

I was somewhat put out. What was the reason for such unseemly haste? I was quite shocked by it. It seemed really as if I were being thrown at the gentleman's head. I was in a hurry to know the why and the wherefore. I thought the concert would never end.

After ages of waiting the second interval came, and I began again :

"Mamma, tell me why."

"I can't tell you anything just now. It would take too long. I'll tell you all presently, when we get home. But if he's invited it must be to-night ; and there's not a minute to lose—yes or no ? "

"Mamma, you're hurrying me."

"No, I'm not hurrying you. You are at liberty to decline."

"Very well, then—yes."

"Dinner on Thursday ? "

"Thursday will do very well."

Between the third and fourth waltzes, mamma said hurriedly to papa :

"Invite him to dinner."

"What day ? "

"Thursday."

"All right."

Papa has behaved with admirable docility and resignation. I never saw him in such a serious *rôle* before. It is true that the music seemed to bewilder him so that he scarcely knew what he was doing. I felt restless, and thought, "There, now, he'll go and invite the wrong one." Nothing of the sort. He gave the invitation quite correctly, and it was accepted with enthusiasm.

We left at midnight, and before we had fairly got away from the Mercereys' I said to mamma :

"I see clearly that you are as anxious as possible that I should accept this man."

"Certainly."

"Then tell me——"

"Just let me get my breath first. I am quite exhausted. I'll tell you everything when we get home."

An hour later I knew all. It was the most extraordinary thing in the world. Yesterday morning at eight o'clock a maid awoke mamma, and gave her a note marked "Important." It was from Madame de Mercerey, and was as follows :

"I have a headache and cannot leave my room. Come—come at once to see me. A splendid stroke of luck for Irene."

Mamma at once got up and went to Madame Mercerey.

But I must leave the rest till to-morrow. We dine at eight o'clock.

November 27th.

Well, mamma went off post-haste, and this is what she heard from Madame Mercerey: "The two Martelle-Simieuses, the elder, Adrien (he's mine), and the younger, Paul, lost their grandmother ten years ago. She was an excellent old lady—very rich and very crotchety. She had one fixed idea—that of ensuring the perpetuity of her family. She seemed to imagine that if the Martelle-Simieuses became extinct the world would of necessity come to an end. She was not by any means stupid, and she caused a very ingenious and peculiar clause to be inserted in her will, by which she set aside 1,000,000 francs, which sum, together with the accumulated interest, was to go to her grandson Adrien if he married before reaching the age of twenty-five. If he failed to marry within the time stipulated, it passed to his brother Paul, on the same conditions. If both brothers insisted on remaining bachelors the money went to the poor. The trifle thus set aside now amounts to the respectable sum of one and a half millions. Adrien showed no inclination to marry, but was addicted to sport, and wished above all to maintain his independence. 'I will not marry,' he used to say. 'I have an income of 180,000 francs, and that's enough for me. With a little care and economy I can make both ends meet.' In short, he regarded the approach of the fatal 10th of January with perfect complacency, although he knew that on that day he would be twenty-five."

Toward the end of last year there was a great speculating craze in our set—a sort of commercial crusade against the infidel Jews. Adrien plunged into speculation, not so much for the sake of gain as for excitement, and to do good. He assisted in an attempt to maintain the credit of a certain bank which was hard pressed.

In the crash that ensued the poor fellow lost heavily—1,400,000 francs. So his income was reduced to 80,000, and naturally he was very much pinched. But he wasn't by any means depressed. He showed a brave face to misfortune, and at once set to work to reduce his expenditure by dismissing some of his servants and selling some of his horses.

His resolution not to marry remained unaltered. But about a month ago some of his friends undertook to show him the error of his ways. They pointed out how absurd it was to stupidly let such a fortune slip from his grasp, simply through want of decision to close his hand, and that he might easily marry and get a heap of money into the bargain, so that the unpleasantness of marrying might be greatly alleviated. This argument shook his resolution somewhat. He asked his cousin, Madame de Riémens, to look out for a wife for him. She sought, and found that great gawk Catherine de Puymarin, who is very, *very* rich, but no more figure than a lath. His first words when he saw her were: "She is too slim, and won't look well on horse-back." From the moment that he began to entertain the thought of marrying, he settled it as a *sine qua non* that his wife must be a good horsewoman.

Time was flying, and Adrien's friends worried and pressed him. He had begun by saying "No" to them. Then he declined to say either "Yes" or "No." He was in all probability going to say "Yes" when the fateful and dramatic day arrived—November 24th.

On that eventful day, instead of going to ride in the afternoon as I usually do, I had to go in the morning with Monsieur Coates, who kindly considers me one of his most brilliant pupils, and who occasionally does the Bois with me.

At ten o'clock I drove out in a dog-cart with Miss Morton. We stopped near the Champignon, on the right, at the entrance of the Bois, where Monsieur Coates was waiting for me. The groom had brought Triboulet, who doesn't always behave very well, and on the day in question, as he hadn't been out of his box for forty-eight hours, he was full of mischief, and capered and pranced in fine style. I had had to dress very hurriedly, as it happened, and Virginie had skewered my hair into two balls, and to keep the puffs in place she had stuck in about a dozen hairpins.

Monsieur Coates helped me to mount, but not without some difficulty, for Triboulet was remarkably frisky and disinclined to be mounted. As soon as he felt me on his back he began to plunge, and tore off at full tilt. But I am pretty much at home on horseback—besides, I know how to manage Triboulet, and I punished him soundly. Just, however, as we were in the middle of our explanations I felt something rolling—rolling over my shoulders. It was my hair, which had come down, and was spreading itself in an avalanche, which

carried my hat away. So there I was, bareheaded—Triboulet racing as hard as he could, and my hair flying out behind.

At that precise moment, Adrien, Comte de Martelle-Simieuse, rode down the Allée des Poteaux, and got a view of the performance. He reined up at a respectful distance, quite surprised at the unusual sight, and in something less than no time he had given vent to three little exclamations of admiration and wonder :

The first was for the horsewoman : “ ’Pon my word, she does ride well.”

The second was for my hair : “ What a magnificent head of hair.”

The third was for my face : “ Gad—how pretty.”

Triboulet, in the meantime, had got a little calmer. The groom managed to find five of the scattered hairpins, and I got my hair into a little better condition, and fastened my veil around my head.

Finally, Monsieur Coates and I started, the groom riding behind, and behind him rode the Comte de Martelle-Simieuse, who made a second tour of the Bois in my honour.

I, in my innocence, never dreamt of the conquest I had made. The weather was rather cold and raw, and we went at a good pace. Triboulet, stung by the keen air, made several attempts at insurrection, but he soon found out whom he had to deal with. Monsieur Coates was very much pleased with me.

“ This morning,” said he, “ you ride superbly—like an angel ”—which was also the opinion of my second, self-appointed groom, who kept saying to himself :

“ How well she rides ! How well she rides ! ”

That was the idea which filled his head during the ride, and he compared me with Catherine de Puymarin.

The ride finished, I went and found Miss Morton, got into the dog-cart, and set off for the Rue de Varennes. Young Martelle-Simieuse trotted behind and acted as my escort home.

He waited until the door was opened and we had entered, then he satisfied himself that I lived in a good house, in a good street, and that from all appearances I was no adventuress.

What he then wanted was the name of the intrepid Amazon. A very simple idea occurred to him. What does the name matter for the moment ? He returned home, got the directory—Rue de Varennes, 49 *bis*, Baron and Baronne de Léoty. That is how he discovered the name of her who will perhaps become the faithful partner of his joys

and sorrows. Baron de Léoty. He knew papa from the club. But had papa a daughter? The mystery had to be solved.

It was very soon solved, for that evening Adrien dined at the Mercereys', and during a lull in the conversation he said carelessly to Madame Mercerey, "Do you happen to know a Monsieur de Léoty?"

"Quite well."

"Has he a daughter?"

"Yes."

"How old is she?"

"About twenty."

"Very pretty, isn't she?"

At which, it appears, there was a general and enthusiastic outburst in my honour. He was the only one present who didn't know me, poor fellow. Madame de Mercerey wanted to know the reason for all his inquiries. So he recounted the story of the morning's ride, my horse's obstinacy, my firmness, my hair flying in the wind—in fact, it was quite a lyrical description, which caused general stupefaction, for he had never been heard to sing in that strain before.

Whereupon Madame de Mercerey showed presence of mind which was as rare as it was admirable. *En passant* it must be observed that she loves mamma and hates the Puymarins heartily, although, until about six weeks ago, they were the best of friends. She really has good cause to be offended with them, though.

The Puymarins have given three *soirées* this year—the Orleans princes were at one, and the Grand Duke Vladimir at another, while the third was made up of nobodies. Well, the Duchess invited the Mercereys with the nobodies. Now, considering their birth and fortune, they might reasonably have expected more consideration than that. For that reason they are very angry—and justifiably so.

Now comes Madame de Mercerey's stroke of genius. Taking the ball, as it were, on the rise, without a moment's hesitation, she said, in the presence of her husband, who was stupefied at the assertion, that on the following evening they were going to have a few friends, among whom Madame and Mademoiselle Léoty were invited, and that Monsieur de Martelle-Simieuse would be welcome if he cared to come. There would be some music, and he would have an opportunity of seeing his fair heroine of the Bois. Monsieur de Mercerey was thunder-struck.

"Aren't you mistaken in the date, my dear?" he said. "We were surely going to the Gymnase to-morrow night to see the new piece of Octave Feuillet."

"No, my dear; that is for the day after to-morrow."

"I thought that—I ordered the box myself."

"It is for the day after to-morrow, I tell you."

Upon which Monsieur subsided and got no further explanation of the riddle until dinner was over. Madame de Mercerey's exertions did not stop at that. She took possession of Monsieur de Martelle-Simieuse, and treated him to a eulogy of me.

"Irene de Léoty is just the girl to suit you—just the wife you want. The meeting this morning was clearly the work of Providence."

He repeated as refrain :

"How well she rides!"

Yesterday, after having seen mamma, Madame de Mercerey, in spite of her headache, courageously set to work and took the field to get people together—engaged musicians and got programmes printed. What admirable activity!

On what insignificant trifles our destiny hangs. If Virginie had fastened my hair up properly, if Triboulet had been quiet, if the Puymarins had not put the Mercereys among the nobodies—Monsieur de Martelle-Simieuse would not have been invited to dine at our house to-morrow, and I should not be asking myself the question :

"Shall I or shall I not be Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse?"

Poor Puymarins! They have come to Paris for the sole purpose of exhibiting their phenomenon. Poor Catherine de Puymarin! Shall I let her keep her count, or shall I take him myself?

I don't yet know. But I do know that the sixth has not made a bad start, and if I *had* to bet on the result, I would not give odds.

November 29th. Ten o'clock in the morning.

What deliberations there were about the dinner. Should it be a big affair or a small one? Where should *he* be placed? Opposite me or at my side? Mamma at first held out for opposite. She maintained that I produce a much better effect full face than in profile, especially when I am *décolletée*, and of course I *was décolletée*. I stuck out for being at his side. I didn't feel at all nervous, at the idea of having him near me. It was necessary to make him talk, so as to be able to take his measure. I still held to my resolution of not getting

married without knowing what I was doing. So, of course, he was put at my side—on my right. So as not to be too hungry, and to have plenty of time for cross-questioning, I had a pretty substantial lunch at five o'clock. That left me free to turn the conversation as I wished—which I did.

We were at table over an hour and a half, and at the end of that time I was convinced that we were made for each other. We first talked about carriages and hunting. It was a splendid start. I discovered immediately that his ideal of a horse is just the same as mine—not too thin, and not too high—light certainly, but not too slim; elegant, but well formed. I think he was somewhat surprised to find that I was *au fait* in such matters. About carriages and gear our ideas are exactly the same.

He was both surprised and charmed. When dinner began he was evidently excited and ill at ease, but as we chatted, and I put him at his ease, the conversation began to go swimmingly. We spoke the same language. We were made to understand each other.

He hunts boars with a pack of eighty hounds—magnificent animals of the best breed. He described his hunting suit minutely—coat *à la française*, colour of dead leaves, facings and pockets of blue velvet. It would be charming to have a costume to harmonise with the dead leaves. I have already an idea for a little hat—a dainty little thing.

One reason which induces me to favour him is that, as a rule, we have to choose our husbands from among men who have nothing to do, and who live lives of the most appalling idleness. That is the reason why boredom and fatigue ruins so many happy households.

His time is, however, quite occupied. He hasn't a single minute of free time which he can really call his own. His energy and intellect are employed in pursuits which are at the same time useful and elegant. He is one of the leaders of a very smart coterie, which has just been organised; member of the committee of a pigeon-shooting society, and of a skaters' league; he is interested in a society for steeple-chasing, and is part owner of a stud of race-horses. With so many irons in the fire it is evident that he is fully occupied.

All which I had learned in half an hour. Then I passed on to politics, and catechised him thereon. This is a very, very important question, and I have fully made up my mind to have no misunderstandings on that head. Poor mamma has suffered cruelly, and I am resolved not to expose myself to like annoyances.

Mamma has been very happy with papa—except from a political standpoint. She was very young when she was married. Her family was an ancient one, and of strict monarchical principles. So was papa. So far, so good. But toward the end of 1865 papa went over to the Empire. It was not because his opinions had changed—he took the step out of goodness of heart. Poor papa is *so* good—too good in fact. His change in politics was due to his devotion to my uncle Armand, his brother, who is now general of division. He was only a captain then, and had had no promotion for ages. He was not in favour because papa refused to set foot in the Tuileries, in spite of the many advances made to him. So at last papa, who adored Uncle Armand, accepted an invitation and promised to present mamma. That was a veritable triumph for the Empire, for there is no bluer blood in France than that of mamma's family.

Mamma passed the day of the presentation in tears. She was, however, forced to obey, but on the way there was a frightful scene in the landau. Mamma became obstinate, and declared that she would not be presented. She wanted to get out of the carriage into the street, although she was wearing white satin shoes and a crown of roses, and it was snowing heavily at the time. At length she became quieter, and resigned herself to her fate.

A fortnight afterward Uncle Armand received a decoration, and at the end of six months was chief of a squadron. But the affair caused many doors to be shut against papa and mamma. That caused him no trouble—not a bit ; in fact, he was rather pleased than otherwise. He detests society, and always has his club. But society is mamma's life-breath, and she is not a member of the Jockey Club, so she suffered cruelly.

Nearly all the doors which were shut have since been opened—that is to say, since the establishment of the Republic, because since then many things have been forgotten. The remainder would be thrown open to me were I once Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. I should be received everywhere with open arms. Since the beginning of the century the political attitude of the Martelle-Simieuses has been irreproachable. It did not even trip during the Empire.

The Martelle-Simieuses can trace their pedigree, fairly and without any trickery, back to the fourteenth century. Adrien's mother—there, I am already calling him Adrien—Adrien's mother was a Précigny-Laroche, and as for his father—Adrien has published a little book about

his genealogy. Only a hundred copies were printed and distributed among his friends. Madame de Mercerey has a copy of it, which she lent to mamma. I have read it, and re-read it, until I know it by heart. It proves incontestably that Adrien is the third in rank among the counts of France—not fourth, but third.

Of course, one must naturally consider nobility of heart and elevation of character in the first place, but one must not forget to attach their real importance to these other things. They are of enormous interest in life, and especially at this particular moment, in the midst of this flood of self-styled nobility, in the presence of Spanish dukes and Italian princes, who are easily able, if we cannot prove that we are really of noble family, to steal a march on us, and usurp our position in society. I couldn't bear the thought of being put at table at dinner with money-makers and literary persons.

Another point demands attention, for nothing is too trifling to notice when it is a question of making certain definite arrangements for the comfort and pleasure of after-life. One ought firmly to secure what one wants. Mamma has a box at the opera every Monday. It has been understood, for some time past, that when I marry I am to go halves on that box. Mamma will have it one Monday, and I the next. That's a very good arrangement, and I am quite satisfied with it.

Now, if I marry Adrien, I shall have a box in the first row, in front, at the Théâtre Français, every Tuesday from December to June. This is how it will be arranged. He has an aunt, a dear old aunt, very rich, without children (so he is her heir), very old, asthmatic, and she has the said box at the Théâtre Français. She is quite willing to hand it over to him, for she never uses it. She has not been in the theatre for over three years. What a dear old aunt she is!

All that information I got out of him between the soup and the cheese. So, when, after dinner, mamma rushed to me and said, "Well?" I replied:

"I don't think I could find a better."

"Then it's settled?"

"Two are necessary for a marriage."

"Oh, you may set your mind at rest on that score. You are two. I have been watching you the whole time during dinner. His head is quite turned."

That was my opinion, too. When mamma rushed to me, he rushed off to Madame Mercerey, who, of course, was of the party. He loved

me to distraction ; adored me, would marry only me—me and nobody else. And he besought Madame Mercerey to go and demand me from mamma at once.

She had to try to pacify him, and to show him that one must not act too rashly. Mamma, for her part, would have been quite contented to settle the affair at once. She had a dread of the machinations of the Puymarin clique.

I didn't share her fear in the least. I recognised clearly what an effect I had produced, and I felt that I was mistress of the situation. So I reminded mamma of her promises, and of my resolution only to come to a decision when I had carefully weighed the pros and cons, and said that I had only seen him twice—each time in evening dress. I was determined to see him twice in the daytime, and in frock coat. I knew how Cousin Mathilde had managed. She saw her husband twice in the daytime—once in the Louvre and once at the Hippodrome. As there was no Hippodrome where I could see Adrien, I would substitute the museum at Cluny. I was determined, however, to have my two interviews in broad daylight.

So Madame Mercerey arranged an accidental meeting at the Louvre for to-day at three o'clock punctually, in front of Murillo's " Virgin."

The same day. Five o'clock.

We have just returned from an hour's stroll in the galleries, where we did not pay much attention to the pictures. I imagine that he is surprisingly ignorant of pictures. But then I have no thought of marrying an art critic. He has such a fine figure, and dresses so well. He speaks very little, is very reserved, but very correct ; and above all, never makes stupid remarks. Taking him altogether, I am quite contented.

As soon as we were alone in the carriage in the Rue Rivoli, I had to repulse another attack from mamma :

" He's simply charming. I should think that you would never insist on Cluny now."

" No. I waive that. Never mind Cluny."

" That's right. Then you've decided ? "

" Not yet, mamma ; not yet. One oughtn't to rush madly into marriage after having got a little information about a man's fortune and situation."

" But what more do you want ? "

"To see him on horseback. He's seen me riding, but I haven't seen him."

In short, Madame de Mercerey, whose devotion is indefatigable, is going to advise him to-night to go and ride about at the entrance of the Avenue des Acacias about ten o'clock to-morrow morning. As inducement she will hint delicately that he may possibly meet papa and me. For papa—I must say that papa astonishes me—he is acting the *rôle* of a father who has a marriageable daughter to perfection. He hasn't mounted a horse for four years, but to-morrow he is going to risk a broken neck.

November 30th.

We had a ride round the Bois—all three of us—papa, he, and I. *He* looks very well on horseback. He rode a splendid bay mare. I will take her for myself, and will pass Triboulet on to him, for I know Triboulet too well, and am tired of him.

On my return I flung my arms round mamma's neck.

"Yes, a thousand times," I said.

And with tears in my eyes, I thanked her for having been so indulgent, so good, so patient.

December 4th.

To-day at three o'clock the old aunt who has the box at the theatre on Tuesdays is to come to demand my hand officially, and so before the 10th of January (that will be absolutely necessary because of the grandmother's will) I shall be Comtesse de Martelle-Simieuse. Adrien will get the one and a half millions and me into the bargain, as extra consolation prize. I think it will be money easily gained. I don't think that he is much to be pitied.

December 11th.

The wedding is fixed for January 6th. It is absurd to get married at such a time, but it couldn't be arranged otherwise. The will! The will! Besides, after all, the date doesn't displease me so very much. We shall have a short—a *very* short—honeymoon—a few days at Nice—ten days at the outside.

After that Paris in full swing, with all the theatres open. The unfortunate Louise de Montbrian got married last spring—at the end of May, and returned to Paris after a six-weeks' honeymoon only to find the city torrid and sinister.

We shall be supremely happy—of that I haven't the slightest doubt. He adores me. And I! Do I love him? Well, I must be

candid with myself, and it would not be true if I declared, in the phrases so common in English novels, that I love him madly ; that I only really live when he is present ; that I tremble at the sound of his footsteps, and start when I hear his voice.

Oh, no ! I am not so easily moved. My heart can't be expected to go at that rate. But I already like him very much. Love will come in time, I have no doubt.

Love is such an economiser in a household. I bring a million, and we can reckon on an income of about 230,000 francs. That may at first sight seem a very large income, but it isn't really so. First of all we must deduct about 80,000 francs for the keeping up of Simieuse, our château in Vendée, and for hunting. That will leave only 150,000 francs for living expenses, which amount will be sufficient if we love each other and pull together like good chums.

But if, on the contrary, we begin after a short time—and this is the history of many households—to pull in opposite directions, we shall only have 75,000 francs each, and that will mean pinching—supposing that theatres—leaving the opera and the Théâtre Français out of the reckoning—cost 2000 or 3000 francs a year if we go together, it would at once be double that sum if we went separately. And so with everything else—the expenditure doubled.

Take, for instance, Caroline and her husband. They have only 100,000 francs per annum, but they live well, and without economising. Why ? Because they love each other. They have quite a small house, and naturally don't require a host of servants. They receive little, and rarely go out. The more they are with each other, the more they see of each other, the more they are satisfied. Caroline is quite content, too, with 12,000 francs for her toilet.

Take Adèle as an example of the contrary. Poor girl, she married very much against her own will and judgment. Her mother was dazzled by the title. Certainly a title is something—in fact, it is a great deal—but it is not exactly everything. Well, her marriage with Gontran turned out badly. Things went wrong from the first week. Consequently they find themselves pinched in spite of their great income of 250,000 francs. She spends a fortune on clothes, on stupid whims. It costs her much more to satisfy the whole world than it would to please one individual. The Duke, in consequence, has taken to play, and has already squandered half of his fortune.

Caroline said to me recently :

"As soon as you are married try to love your husband. In our set that means a saving of at least 100,000 per annum, and even if people can't love each other for love's sake, they ought to for convenience."

"Oh, yes! I'll love him. I'll love him. Besides, it's only the 11th of December. Between now and the 6th of January I have still twenty-six days before me."

THE DREAM

LUDOVIC HALÉVY

THE day before yesterday my friend Raoul was married at Sainte Clotilde's. On arriving at the church I found a great crowd, and the ceremony already in progress. The priest finished his address thus: "Be then united on earth until you are definitely united in heaven."

I could scarcely restrain an exclamation. Raoul was not marrying a spinster, but the pretty little Countess Jeanne de Charmelieu, the widow of my friend Gaston de Charmelieu. That charming woman was destined to make my friends happy. Raoul after Gaston. On earth, nothing could be simpler. Gaston having withdrawn, Raoul remained; but for the definite union above, in heaven, there will be two, Gaston and Raoul, the first and second husband.

I left the church, paid two or three calls, returned home, dined at the club, went to the opera, and was everywhere pursued by the ridiculous idea, "How will Raoul and Gaston arrange things in the other world?"

I went to bed and slept. Then the dream began.

I was in Paradise, at the railway station. A great bustle of trains. The carriages left empty, and returned more or less full. St. Thomas was the station-master. I had a chat with him, and he very kindly explained the organisation. He went on talking, but I ceased to listen, for at the door of a saloon carriage I saw the pretty head of my widow of Sainte Clotilde's, Gaston's wife, Raoul's wife. And she rushed about, crying out, "Paradise, where is Paradise? Here's my ticket."

And St. Peter came to her and said, "Your ticket, madame; kindly show me your ticket."

"Here it is, Monsieur."

"Quite correct, you may pass. Here is the entrance to Paradise."

I was seized with an immense desire to follow her.

Who knows? Perhaps Raoul was dead, and my widow would find herself between her two husbands.

I asked St. Thomas if he could allow me to enter.

"Easily," he replied.

"Yes, but at most for an hour. I don't want to be compelled to stay. I shall be able to leave. Because, don't you know, however pleasant Paradise may be, if I'm still good for a few years on earth, I don't want to lose them. Life only comes once, and Paradise is for ever."

"Be assured, you will be able to come out again." And he took me to St. Peter: "You will know this gentleman again," he said; "he wants to have a look round, and come out again."

"Pray go in, Monsieur; I shall know you again."

There I was in Paradise. Just in the nick of time. Raoul and Gaston, who had been eagerly scanning the new arrivals, had already rushed up to *their wife*.

Gaston had seized her right hand and was drawing her to one side, saying, "Jeanne, my dearest Jeanne."

Raoul had seized her left hand, and was pulling her towards the other side, saying, "Marthe, my dearest Marthe."

She had two Christian names, and she had thought it better for her second husband to use the one that had not served for the first. She was a charming creature, with exquisite delicacy of feeling.

Neither Raoul nor Gaston, however, appeared disposed to give way.

"Jeanne!"

"Marthe!"

"I am your first husband."

"I am your second husband."

"My right is indisputable."

"Monsieur, leave this lady alone."

"I am not speaking to you, Monsieur. I do not know you!"

I do not know you! Now on earth, when they were alive, they were intimate and inseparable friends. Raoul, the second husband, was always to be found at Gaston's, and ill-natured gossips said—but as if one can believe everything ill-natured gossips say!

However, the dispute between Raoul and Gaston waxed hotter. Their voices became louder. Life in heaven is pleasant, but just a little monotonous; and the least event has something of the effect of a carriage accident in a small provincial town. The elect ran up from all sides. Some took the part of the first husband, others that of the second. Jeanne did not move; she had freed her hands, and did not speak either to Raoul or to Gaston.

St. Thomas had accompanied me into Paradise.

" You must often have similar cases," I said. " Women with two husbands are not uncommon on earth."

" True ! But what is unusual, absolutely unusual, is that the two husbands should fight over the wife. Ordinarily, in such circumstances, the husbands don't want the wife again."

" And when the situation is reversed ? when there are two wives for one husband ? "

" Oh ! that's quite a different thing. It's the women who are anxious to catch the husband. Women are mad about marriage even in Paradise."

At that moment St. Thomas was interrupted by a loud shout from the crowd of the elect. " The holy father ! the holy father ! " He chanced to be passing that way, and hearing the noise, came up.

A dream, this is merely a dream that I cannot get out of my mind.

He stopped and asked what was going on. The affair was shortly told him.

" Well," said the holy father, " what could be simpler ? The lady is here as a reward for her piety and Christian sentiments. She has every right to absolute and long-lasting happiness. Let her make her choice between the two gentlemen."

" But," remarked Gaston, " what of the one who comes in a bad second ? "

You observe how Gaston, who, when alive, had kept a racing stud, preserved, even after his death, deplorable habits of speech.

" Well," replied the holy father, " I'll give him one of the unclaimed women who crowd Paradise. Come, madame, do not waste any time ; make your choice."

Silent, motionless, Jeanne stood between her two husbands, and then Gaston and Raoul in turn, like an ancient Greek play, sought words which might most surely move their wife's heart.

" Really, Monsieur," interrupted Raoul, " such recollections are out of place——"

" Possibly, Monsieur, but I am permitted to recall—to speak of my love, and also of my trust. My confidence was to be admired ! How many persons came to me and said perfidiously, ' Give heed to Raoul. Observe him carefully. He is of course very fond of you ; but there's one person he likes better, and that is your wife.' I paid no attention to such idle tales."

"I also proved valiant in the matter of confidencé. Later, Monsieur, when, after you, I was in my turn the husband, gossip still went its way. People spoke to me of Monsieur de Séricourt, of Séricourt, my best friend; what an absurdity!"

I noticed that at the name of Séricourt Jeanne could not repress a slight start. But I was the only one who observed it; Raoul remarked nothing, and continued:

"And when Séricourt was killed in Mexico, when the unexpected news caused you most natural and legitimate grief, I received an abominable anonymous letter, stating that my wife wept for the friend more than she would weep for the husband. I never mentioned the letter to you. To suspect you! To suspect Séricourt!"

"Who may Séricourt be?" cried the holy father. "Is he a third husband? I'm fairly puzzled by all this."

"One word in conclusion, holy father, just one word more. On my wedding-day an excellent priest assured me at Sainte Clotilde's that our provisory union on earth would be followed by a definite union in heaven."

"And me, holy father," replied Gaston, "on my wedding-day, at the Madeleine, a bishop, do you mark—not a priest, a bishop—made me the same promise in exactly the same terms."

"Dear me, this becomes very embarrassing, very embarrassing," said the holy father. "My representatives on earth sometimes act very thoughtlessly. But, madame, it is for you to decide."

And then the little widow, blushing, and with much emotion, said, "If you are of infinite goodness, Lord, you will allow me to go to M. de Séricourt, who is in that little cloud to my left; he has been making signs to me for the last quarter of an hour."

I turned my head and saw Séricourt performing a gallant and expressive pantomime in his little cloud.

Another friend, Séricourt! I repeat that this charming woman was destined to make all my friends happy, even to eternity, both in this world and the next.

"Why didn't you say so at once?" replied the holy father. "That settles everything. Make yourself happy with M. de Séricourt. Since you were a good Christian, my only desire is that you should have a good time in Paradise."

And thereupon I awoke with a start.

ÉMILE GABORIAU

1885-1873

THE ACCURSED HOUSE

THE Vicomte de B——, an amiable and charming young man, was peacefully enjoying an income of 30,000 livres yearly, when, unfortunately for him, his uncle, a miser of the worst species, died, leaving him all his wealth, amounting to nearly two millions.

In running through the documents of succession, the Vicomte de B—— learned that he was the proprietor of a nouse in the Rue de la Victoire. He learned, also, that the unfurnished building, bought in 1849 for 300,000 francs, now brought in, clear of taxes, rentals amounting to 82,000 francs a year.

“Too much, too much, entirely,” thought the generous vicomte, “my uncle was too hard; to rent at this price is usury, one cannot deny it. When one bears a great name like mine, one should not lend himself to such plundering. I will begin to-morrow to lower my rents, and my tenants will bless me.”

With this excellent purpose in view, the vicomte sent immediately for the *concierge* of the building, who presented himself as promptly, with back bent like a bow.

“Bernard, my friend,” said the vicomte, “go at once from me and notify all your tenants that I lower their rents by one-third.”

That unheard-of word “lower” fell like a brick on Bernard’s head. But he quickly recovered himself; he had heard badly; he had not understood.

“Low—er the rents!” stammered he. “Monsieur le Vicomte deigns to jest. Lower! Monsieur, of course, means to raise the rents.”

“I was never more serious in my life, my friend,” the vicomte returned; “I said, and I repeat it, lower the rents.”

This time the *concierge* was surprised to the point of bewilderment—so thrown off his balance that he forgot himself and lost all restraint.

“Monsieur has not reflected,” persisted he. “Monsieur will regret this evening. Lower the tenants’ rents! Never was such a thing

known, monsieur ! If the lodgers should learn of it, what would they think of monsieur ? What would people say in the neighbourhood ? Truly——”

“ Monsieur Bernard, my friend,” dryly interrupted the vicomte, “ I prefer, when I give an order, to be obeyed without reply. You hear me—go ! ”

Staggering like a drunken man, Monsieur Bernard went out from the house of his proprietor.

All his ideas were upset, overthrown, confounded. Was he, or was he not, the plaything of a dream, a ridiculous nightmare ? Was he himself Pierre Bernard, or Bernard somebody else ?

“ Lower his rents ! lower his rents ! ” repeated he. “ It is not to be believed ! If indeed the lodgers had complained ! But they have not complained ; on the contrary, all are good payers. Ah ! if his uncle could only know this, he would rise from the tomb ! His nephew has gone mad, 'tis certain ! Lower the rents ! They should have up this young man before a family council ; he will finish badly ! Who knows—after this—what he will do next ? He lunched too well, perhaps, this morning.”

And the worthy Bernard was so pale with emotion when he re-entered his lodge, so pale and spent, that on seeing him enter, his wife and daughter Amanda exclaimed as with one voice :

“ Goodness ! what is it ? What has happened to you now ? ”

“ Nothing,” responded he, with altered voice, “ absolutely nothing.”

“ You are deceiving me,” insisted Madame Bernard, “ you are concealing something from me ; do not spare me ; speak, I am strong—what did the new proprietor tell you ? Does he think of turning us off ? ”

“ If it were only that ! But just think, he told me with his own lips, he told me to—ah ! you will never believe me——”

“ Oh, yes ; only do go on.”

“ You will have it then !— Well, then, he told me, he ordered me to notify all the tenants that—*he lowered their rents one-third !* Did you hear what I said ?—*lowered the rents of the tenants——*”

But neither Madame nor Mademoiselle Bernard heard him out—they were twisting and doubling with convulsive laughter.

“ Lower ! ” repeated they ; “ ah ! what a good joke, what a droll man ! Lower the tenants' rents.”

But Bernard, losing his temper and insisting that he must be taken

seriously in his own lodge, his wife lost her temper too, and a quarrel followed! Madame Bernard declaring that Monsieur Bernard had, beyond a doubt, taken his fantastic order from the bottom of a litre of wine in the restaurant at the corner.

But for Mademoiselle Amanda the couple would undoubtedly have come to blows, and finally Madame Bernard, who did not wish to be thought demented, threw a shawl over her head and ran to the proprietor's house. Bernard had spoken truly; with her own two ears, ornamented with big, gilded hoops, she heard the incredible word. Only, as she was a wise and prudent woman, she demanded "a bit of writing" to put, as she said, "her responsibility under cover."

She, too, returned thunderstruck, and all the evening in the lodge, father, mother, and daughter deliberated.

Should they obey? or should they warn some relative of this mad young man, whose common sense would oppose itself to such insanity?

They decided to obey.

Next morning, Bernard, buttoning himself into his best frock coat, made the rounds of the three-and-twenty lodges to announce his great news.

Ten minutes afterward the house in the Rue de la Victoire was in a state of commotion impossible to describe. People who for forty years had lived on the same floor, and never honoured each other with so much as a tip of the hat, now clustered together and chatted eagerly.

"Do you know, monsieur?"

"It is very extraordinary."

"Simply unheard of!"

"The proprietor's lowered my rent!"

"One-third, is it not? Mine also."

"Astounding! It *must* be a mistake!"

And despite the affirmations of the Bernard family, despite even the "bit of writing" "under cover," there were found among the tenants doubting Thomases, who doubted still in the face of everything.

Three of them actually wrote to the proprietor to tell him what had passed, and to charitably warn him that his *concierge* had wholly lost his mind. The proprietor responded to these sceptics, confirming what Bernard had said. Doubt, thereafter, was out of the question.

Then began reflections and commentaries.

"Why had the proprietor lowered his rents?"

"Yes *why*?"

"What motives," said they all, "actuate this strange man? For certainly he must have grave reasons for a step like this! An intelligent man, a man of good sense, would never deprive himself of good fat revenues, well secured, for the simple pleasure of depriving himself. One would not conduct himself thus without being forced, constrained by powerful or terrible circumstances."

And each said to himself:

"There is something under all this!"

"But what?"

And from the first floor to the sixth they sought and conjectured and delved in their brains. Every lodger had the preoccupied air of a man that strives with all his wits to solve an impossible cipher, and everywhere there began to be a vague disquiet, as it happens when one finds himself in the presence of a sinister mystery.

Some one went so far as to hazard:

"This man must have committed a great and still hidden crime; remorse pushes him to philanthropy."

"It was not a pleasant idea, either, the thought of living thus side by side with a rascal; no, by no means; he might be repentant, and all that, but suppose he yielded to temptation once more!"

"The house, perhaps, was badly built?" questioned another, anxiously.

"Hum-m, so-so! no one could tell; but all knew one thing—it was very, very old!"

"True! and it had been necessary to prop it when they dug the drain last year in the month of March."

"Maybe it was the roof, then, and the house is top-heavy?" suggested a tenant on the fifth floor.

"Or perhaps," said a lodger in the garret, "there is a press for coining counterfeit money in the cellar; I have often heard at night a sound like the dull, muffled thud of a coin-stamper."

The opinion of another was that Russian, maybe Prussian, spies had gained a lodgment in the house, while the gentleman of the first storey was inclined to believe that the proprietor purposed to set fire to his house and furniture with the sole object of drawing great sums from the insurance companies.

Then began to happen, as they all declared, extraordinary and even frightful things. On the sixth and attic floors it appeared that strange and absolutely inexplicable noises were heard. Then

the nurse of the old lady on the fourth storey, going one night to steal wine from the cellar, encountered the ghost of the defunct proprietor—he even held in his hand a receipt for rent—by which she knew him !

And the refrain from loft to cellar was :

“ There is something under all this ! ”

From disquietude it had come to fright ; from fright it quickly passed to terror. So that the gentleman of the first floor, who had valuables in his rooms, made up his mind to go, and sent in notice by his clerk.

Bernard went to inform the proprietor, who responded :

“ All right, let the fool go ! ”

But next day the chiropodist of the second floor, though he had naught to fear for his valuables, imitated the gentleman beneath him. Then the bachelors and the little households of the fifth storey quickly followed this example.

From that moment it was a general rout. By the end of the week, everybody had given notice. Every one awaited some frightful catastrophe. They slept no more. They organised patrols. The terrified domestics swore that they too would quit the accursed house and remained temporarily only on tripled wages.

Bernard was no more than the ghost of himself ; the fever of fear had worn him to a shadow.

“ No,” repeated his wife mournfully at each fresh notification, “ no, it is *not* natural.”

Meanwhile three-and-twenty “ For Rent ” placards swung against the façade of the house, drawing an occasional applicant for lodgings.

Bernard—never grumbling now—climbed the staircase and ushered the visitor from apartment to apartment.

“ You can have your choice,” said he to the people that presented themselves, “ the house is entirely vacant ; all the tenants have given notice as one man. They do not know why, exactly, but things have happened, oh ! yes, *things* ! a mystery such as was never before known—the proprietor has lowered his rents ! ”

And the would-be lodgers fled away affrighted.

The term ended, three-and-twenty vans carried away the furniture of the three-and-twenty tenants. Everybody left. From top to bottom, from foundations to garret, the house lay empty of lodgers.

The rats themselves, finding nothing to live on, abandoned it also.

Only the *concierge* remained, grey-green with fear, in his lodge.

Frightful visions haunted his sleep. He seemed to hear lugubrious howlings and sinister murmurs at night that made his teeth chatter with terror and his hair erect itself under his cotton nightcap. Madame Bernard no more closed an eye than he. And Amanda in her frenzy renounced all thought of the operatic stage and married—for nothing in the world but to quit the paternal lodge—a young barber and hair-dresser whom she had never before been able to abide.

At last, one morning, after a more frightful nightmare than usual, Bernard, too, took a great resolution. He went to the proprietor, gave up his keys, and scampered away.

.
And now on the Rue de la Victoire stands the abandoned house, "The Accursed House," whose history I have told you. Dust thickens upon the closed slats, grass grows in the court. No tenant ever presents himself now; and in the quarter, where stands this Accursed House, so funereal is its reputation that even the neighbouring houses on either side of it have also depreciated in value.

Lower one's rents!! Who would think of such a thing!!!

COUNT VILLIERS DE L'ISLE-ADAM

1835-1889

A TORTURE BY HOPE

BELOW the vaults of the *Oficial* of Saragossa one nightfall long ago, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, sixth Prior of the Dominicans of Segovia, third Grand Inquisitor of Spain—followed by a *fra redemptor* (master-torturer), and preceded by two familiars of the Holy Office holding lanterns—descended towards a secret dungeon. The lock of a massive door creaked ; they entered a stifling *in pace*, where the little light that came from above revealed an instrument of torture blackened with blood, a chafing-dish, and a pitcher. Fastened to the wall by heavy iron rings, on a mass of filthy straw, secured by fetters, an iron circlet about his neck, sat a man in rags : it was impossible to guess at his age.

This prisoner was no other than Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, a Jew of Aragon, who, on an accusation of usury and pitiless contempt of the poor, had for more than a year undergone daily torture. In spite of all, " his blind obstinacy being as tough as his skin," he had refused to abjure.

Proud of his descent and his ancestors—for all Jews worthy of the name are jealous of their race—he was descended, according to the Talmud, from Othoniel, and consequently from Ipsiboe, wife of this last Judge of Israel; a circumstance which had sustained his courage under the severest of the incessant tortures.

It was, then, with tears in his eyes at the thought that so steadfast a soul was excluded from salvation, that the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, approaching the quivering Rabbi, pronounced the following words :

" My son, be of good cheer ; your trials here below are about to cease. If, in presence of such obstinacy, I have had to permit, though with sighs, the employment of severe measures, my task of paternal correction has its limits. You are the barren fig-tree, that, found so oft without fruit, incurs the danger of being dried up by the roots . . . but it is for God alone to decree concerning your soul. Perhaps the Infinite Mercy will shine upon you at the last moment ! Let us hope

so. There *are* instances. May it be so ! Sleep, then, this evening in peace. To-morrow you will take part in the *auto da fé*, that is to say, you will be exposed to the *quemadero*, the brazier premonitory of the eternal flame. It burns, you are aware, at a certain distance, my son ; and death takes, in coming, two hours at least, often three, thanks to the moistened and frozen clothes with which we take care to preserve the forehead and the heart of the holocausts. You will be only forty-three. Consider, then, that, placed in the last rank, you will have the time needful to invoke God, to offer unto Him that baptism of fire which is of the Holy Spirit. Hope, then, in the Light, and sleep."

As he ended this discourse, Dom Arbuez—who had motioned the wretched man's fetters to be removed—embraced him tenderly. Then came the turn of the *fra redemptor*, who, in a low voice, prayed the Jew to pardon what he had made him endure in the effort to redeem him ; then the two familiars clasped him in their arms : their kiss, through their cowls, was unheard. The ceremony at an end, the captive was left alone in the darkness.

Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, his lips parched, his face stupefied by suffering, stared, without any particular attention, at the closed door. Closed ? The word, half unknown to himself, awoke a strange delusion in his confused thoughts. He fancied he had seen, for one second, the light of the lanterns through the fissure between the sides of this door. A morbid idea of hope, due to the enfeeblement of his brain, took hold on him. He dragged himself towards this strange thing he had seen ; and, slowly inserting a finger, with infinite precautions, into the crack, he pulled the door towards him. Wonder of wonders ! By some extraordinary chance the familiar who had closed it had turned the great key a little before it had closed upon its jambs of stone. So, the rusty bolt not having entered its socket, the door rolled back into the cell.

The Rabbi ventured to look out.

By means of a sort of livid obscurity he distinguished, first of all, a half-circle of earthy walls, pierced by spiral stairways, and, opposite to him, five or six stone steps, dominated by a sort of black porch, giving access to a vast corridor, of which he could only see, from below, the nearest arches.

Stretching himself along, he crawled to the level of this threshold. Yes, it was indeed a corridor, but of boundless length. A faint light—a sort of dream-light—was cast over it ; lamps suspended to the

arched roof, turned, by intervals, the wan air blue ; the far distance was lost in shadow. Not a door visible along all this length ! On one side only, to the left, small holes, covered with a network of bars, let a feeble twilight through the depths of the wall—the light of sunset apparently, for red gleams fell at long intervals on the flag-stones. And how fearful a silence ! . . . Yet there—there in the depths of the dim distance—the way might lead to liberty ! The wavering hope of the Jew was dogged, for it was the last.

Without hesitation he ventured forth, keeping close to the side of the light-holes, hoping to render himself indistinguishable from the darksome colour of the long walls. He advanced slowly, dragging himself along the ground, forcing himself not to cry out when one of his wounds, recently opened, sent a sharp pang through him.

All of a sudden the beat of a sandal, coming in his direction, echoed along the stone passage. A trembling fit seized him, he choked with anguish, his sight grew dim. So this, no doubt, was to be the end ! He squeezed himself, doubled up on his hands and knees, into a recess, and, half dead with terror, waited.

It was a familiar hurrying along. He passed rapidly, carrying an instrument for tearing out the muscles, his cowl lowered ; he disappeared. The violent shock which the Rabbi had received had half suspended the functions of life ; he remained for nearly an hour unable to make a single movement. In the fear of an increase of torments if he were caught, the idea came to him of returning to his cell. But the old hope chirped in his soul—the divine “ Perhaps,” the comforter in the worst of distresses. A miracle had taken place ! There was no more room for doubt. He began again to crawl towards the possible escape. Worn out with suffering and with hunger, trembling with anguish, he advanced. The sepulchral corridor seemed to lengthen out mysteriously. And he, never ceasing his slow advance, gazed forward through the darkness, on, on, where there *must* be an outlet that should save him.

But, oh ! steps sounding again ; steps, this time, slower, more sombre. The forms of two Inquisitors, robed in black and white, and wearing their large hats with rounded brims, emerged into the faint light. They talked in low voices, and seemed to be in controversy on some important point, for their hands gesticulated.

At this sight Rabbi Aser Abarbanel closed his eyes, his heart beat as if it would kill him, his rags were drenched with the cold sweat of

agony ; motionless, gasping, he lay stretched along the wall, under the light of one of the lamps—motionless, imploring the God of David.

As they came opposite to him the two Inquisitors stopped under the light of the lamp, through a mere chance, no doubt, in their discussion. One of them, listening to his interlocutor, looked straight at the Rabbi. Under this gaze—of which he did not at first notice the vacant expression—the wretched man seemed to feel the hot pincers biting into his poor flesh ; so he was again to become a living wound, a living woe ! Fainting, scarce able to breathe, his eyelids quivering, he shuddered as the robe grazed him. But—strange at once and natural—the eyes of the Inquisitor were evidently the eyes of a man profoundly preoccupied with what he was going to say in reply, absorbed by what he was listening to ; they were fixed, and seemed to look at the Jew *without seeing him*.

And indeed, in a few minutes, the two sinister talkers went on their way, slowly, still speaking in low voices, in the direction from which the prisoner had come. They had not seen him ! And it was so, that, in the horrible disarray of his sensations, his brain was traversed by this thought : “ Am I already dead, so that no one sees me ? ” A hideous impression drew him from his lethargy. On gazing at the wall, exactly opposite to his face, he fancied he saw, over against his, two ferocious eyes observing him ! He flung back his head in a blind and sudden terror ; the hair started upright upon his head. But no, no. He put out his hand, and felt among the stones. What he saw was the *reflection* of the eyes of the Inquisitor still left upon his pupils, and which he had refracted upon two spots of the wall.

Forward ! He must hasten towards that end that he imagined (fondly, no doubt) to mean deliverance ; towards those shadows from which he was no more than thirty paces, or so, distant. He started once more—crawling on hands and knees and stomach—upon his dolorous way, and he was soon within the dark part of the fearful corridor.

All at once the wretched man felt the sensation of cold *upon* his hands that he placed on the flag-stones ; it was a strong current which came from under a little door at the end of the passage. O God, if this door opened on the outer world ! The whole being of the poor prisoner was overcome by a sort of vertigo of hope. He examined the door from top to bottom without being able to distinguish it completely on account of the dimness around him. He felt over it. No

lock, not a bolt ! A latch ! He rose to his feet : the latch yielded beneath his finger ; the silent door opened before him.

" Hallelujah ! " murmured the Rabbi, in an immense sigh, as he gazed at what stood revealed to him from the threshold.

The door opened upon gardens, under a night of stars—upon spring, liberty, life ! The gardens gave access to the neighbouring country that stretched away to the sierras, whose sinuous white lines stood out in profile on the horizon. There lay liberty ! Oh, to fly ! He would run all night under those woods of citrons, whose perfume intoxicated him. Once among the mountains, he would be saved. He breathed the dear, holy air ; the wind reanimated him, his lungs found free play. He heard, in his expanding heart, the " Lazarus, come forth ! " And to give thanks to God who had granted him this mercy, he stretched forth his arms before him, lifting his eyes to the firmament in an ecstasy.

And then he seemed to see the shadow of his arms returning upon himself ; he seemed to feel those shadow-arms surround, enlase him, and himself pressed tenderly against some breast. A tall figure, indeed, was opposite to him. Confidently he lowered his eyes upon this figure, and remained gasping, stupefied, with staring eyes and mouth drivelling with fright.

Horror ! He was in the arms of the Grand Inquisitor himself, the venerable Pedro Arbuez d'Espila, who gazed at him with eyes full of tears, like a good shepherd who has found the lost sheep.

The sombre priest clasped the wretched Jew against his heart with so fervent a transport of charity that the points of the monacal hair-cloth rasped against the chest of the Dominican. And, while the Rabbi Aser Abarbanel, his eyes convulsed beneath his eyelids, choked with anguish between the arms of the ascetic Dom Arbuez, realising confusedly *that all the phases of the fatal evening had been only a calculated torture, that of Hope !* the Grand Inquisitor, with a look of distress, an accent of poignant reproach, murmured in his ear, with the burning breath of much fasting : " What ! my child ! on the eve, perhaps, of salvation . . . you would then leave us ? "

ERNEST DAUDET

B. 1837

THE VENGEANCE OF THE ADMIRAL

LIKE a citadel, the manor-house was planted on the crest of a bare rock that dominated the shore. On one side it overlooked the open sea, with a sky-line closed by the red band of the sunset. On the other side was the roadside of Brest ; and at the end of the roadside the port, above which rose chimneys and the masts of the ships, gleaming in the last flicker of the dying light.

Its narrow windows, with pointed arches, framed bits of the sea, like pieces of greenish silk, along which passed grey sails bellying out in the cool evening wind. Its heavy embattled towers, with their regular indentations, stood out against the stormy sky. The rare shrubs, growing around the walls, had their branches spun out by strong western winds, like the wild sinister tresses of the spectre of a woman fleeing in the night. As twilight deepened, the sky grew heavy with storm-clouds. The gale that shrieked over the sea drove against the rock high white waves that rose and fell with a sound of thunder.

In his study on the first floor, Admiral the Marquis de Bec'Hellouin was sitting alone before a table ; over it was scattered some open letters, many of them yellow with age, and among the letters were some withered flowers, a knot of blue ribbon, and a locket. By the side, half open and empty, was a box of carven ivory, from which the Admiral had taken these relics of love. There was a deep sadness in his face, and, at times, a quick sudden flash of anger lightened in his eyes.

A grand old man, the Admiral. A lean bony face, dull eyes, skinny limbs, all the body exhausted by the malady that was killing him. The famous sailor had even lost the imperious, thundering voice that once sounded over the noises of the storm. Of his strength that was the admiration of the men of the fleet, of his old daring and courage displayed in both battle and tempest—of these nothing remained. Stricken by the deadly disease he was no more than a shadow. And now that death already had him by the throat, he seemed to have left only just enough energy to examine the evidence of the crime he had just discovered, and to dream of avenging himself.

Early that morning he had received an anonymous letter from Nice, where for six weeks the Marquise de Bec'Hellouin had settled for the winter, as she did every year. The letter ran: "It is now fourteen years that your wife has been unfaithful to you. You are the only person who does not know that all this time she has been carrying on with Captain Faucheron, your former aide-de-camp. If you wish to know the truth of the matter, go into the bedroom of the Marquise. At the head of the bed, under the hangings, there is a little box in the wall. Force the lock and read what you find, and you will know the truth."

On receiving this blackguardly letter, the work of some dismissed servant, the Admiral at first rubbed it feverishly between his hands, driving away the suspicions it provoked. But, beset by these suspicions that tortured his heart, he had read it again, doubting for the first time the fidelity of his wife. Then, under the empire of this terrible doubt, he had staggered from his bed, and dragged himself into the empty bedroom, and there, in the spot indicated, he had found the overwhelming proofs of his misfortune.

Now he was groaning over the clear evidence of the dishonour that had fallen on his house. He built up, year by year, the story of shame, and went back to the beginning of the long series of outrages of his honour. Then, driven to the edge of the grave by the blow that had just struck him, he asked himself what vengeance he could take on the guilty couple before he died.

Oh, the wretches! How they had betrayed his trust and repaid, one, his love, the other, his kindness and help! This Faucheron, always treated like his son, who owed everything in his brilliant career to him! And his wife! the miserable woman! She was twenty when he married her, and he was, it is true, fifty. But to the poor, lovely orphan he had brought a glorious name and much wealth; he had assured her his protection while he lived, and an independent life in the future when he was gone. And she had married him freely of her own choice. Since, adored, spoilt, tended, she had had all she could wish for. Her desires became orders, and her caprices were realised as soon as they were expressed. In summer, on the country estate, in winter, in the splendid mansion at Paris or the graceful villa at Nice—everywhere, she was a queen of society; everywhere, the fame and name of her husband gave her the highest rank. And while, always trustful and always loving, far away or near, he brooded

over her with profound tenderness, rejoiced in her successes, and took pride in her beauty, she was betraying him. For forty years he had served his country, fought in Africa, in the Crimea, in Mexico, winning promotion at the sword's point, and amassing glory for his son—and now, suddenly, at the very end of so full a life, he was covered with dishonour by the fault of this creature.

And she condemned him to a still more horrible torture, to a doubt that filled all his heart and brain, and darkened the world to him. His Patrick, the pride and the joy of his life ! Was he his son ? Was he the son of Faucheron ? Patrick had grown up in freedom in the old manor-house, where his mother, every winter, left him in the care of the priest, and where his father came, between two cruises, to embrace him. He was as strong and as upright as a tree. Under his tanned skin, with his deep eyes glowing with pride in his awakening strength, with his brown hair thick on his forehead, his fine figure and lissom limbs, he had the beauty of a young god. He passionately admired the old man whose name he bore ; he loved him still more passionately. Between them there was always an exchange of intimate confidences, in which the heart of the father melted in the caresses of the boy. This paternal happiness, these memories of the deepest of joys, which were the best part of the Admiral's life, had now been overthrown by the crime of the wife.

The unhappy man pressed his trembling hands against his head, that felt as if it would burst. The fever burned in his blood and a shudder ran through his flesh ; and thus he sat, stunned, strengthless, beaten, stammering, " I will avenge myself ! "

But how ? Kill them who had dishonoured his name ? They were far away. Recall them ? But before they arrived, he would be dead. He sought for some means of vengeance. Night came, but he had not found what he wanted. He dragged himself to his bed a broken man.

At dawn the next morning, the medical man of the cruiser *Inflexible*, that had long borne the flag of the Admiral, came to Brest to see his chief, as he did every day. He was terrified on observing what progress had been made in a single day by the disease he was trying to overcome. His face betrayed his terror.

" It is all over, doctor, isn't it ? " said the Admiral.

" Oh ! I have not lost all hope, sir. You are in a bad way, but——"

" No lies. I have faced death before now, and I will not let him take me by surprise at last. The truth ! I order you ! "

The doctor remained silent for two minutes ; then seriously, he said :

" Unless a miracle happens, Admiral, this evening you will stand before your Maker."

The Admiral received the blow calmly.

" Very well," he said. " You will come back, won't you ? "

" I will come back, my Admiral. Would you not like to warn Madame la Marquise ? "

" It is useless. Besides, she is at Nice. I wanted to spare her the sight of my agony. She thinks me unwell, and will always learn soon enough that she is a widow. She will be told when I am dead."

The doctor withdrew.

" How is my father ? " said Patrick, on meeting him outside the door.

The surgeon-major did not answer. But his deep sigh told the boy what was the matter, and the little lad ran towards his father, wild with grief.

" Come to me, my son," said the Admiral. Half rising, his elbow on the pillow, his hand supporting his terribly pale face, he spoke to the boy :

" You are twelve years old, Patrick—only a child. But I am obliged to treat you like a man. I have something to tell you."

It did not take long. When he had finished a sombre fire shone in the eyes of the child. He was so thoughtful and cold and serious that it looked as though the death which was stealing on his father was ageing him and ripening his intelligence, and that in a few minutes he had passed from childhood to manhood, carried along by grief and trouble.

The following year, at the end of autumn, less than ten months after the death of the Admiral, people began to speak in society about the marriage of his widow with the handsome Faucheron. They spoke about the matter with a smile, as an event long expected. It was in fact so. After a long separation, necessitated by social custom, the lovers were about to unite for life in proper form. One morning Captain Faucheron arrived at the manor-house, where the Marquise, since the death of her husband, lived in retirement, devoting herself entirely to her son, while waiting for the return of the man she loved. During the day Patrick came to her, carrying himself with a seriousness beyond his age.

"Is it true," he asked, "that you are now about to marry Captain Faucheron, mother?"

"Who told you?" she said, in a troubled voice.

The child was silent. She continued:

"A son should not question his mother."

"I do not intend," said Patrick resolutely, "that Captain Faucheron shall take the place of my father."

"You do not intend! . . . What is the meaning of this action?" and pointing to the door with an angry gesture, she added, "Leave the room at once, sir!"

He went out. In a few minutes, after going to his own room, he abruptly entered, without knocking, the Captain's room, one hand in his trousers pocket.

Faucheron was shaving himself before the looking-glass. He turned round, saw Patrick, and said:

"You should have knocked before you came in."

"This is my house, and I want to speak to you."

"You want to speak to me? . . . Speak!"

"I know why you are here. What you want to do cannot be done. You will leave this night, and you will never return. I forbid you to marry my mother."

"But the child is mad!"

"Will you obey me?"

"Obey you!" exclaimed Faucheron stupefied, his face pale and his eyes angry. "Be off, you silly little wretch; I will box your ears!"

He strode with raised hand towards Patrick. The boy stepped back, drawing from his pocket the thing he had hidden there. It was a revolver. He lifted his arm, sighted, and fired. The Captain swung round and fell sprawling, a bullet-hole in his forehead. A shriek was heard. The Marquise, entering, had seen everything.

"What have you done! Unhappy boy!" she shrieked, throwing herself on her son to disarm him.

Patrick let her take his weapon; then, as she flung herself with passionate frenzy on the corpse, he said savagely:

"Before my father died, he revealed to me that this man was your enemy and mine. He ordered me to watch over you, to protect you, and if need be to free you. I have obeyed."

It is thought by most people that Captain Faucheron committed suicide.

ARMAND SILVESTRE

1889-1891

THE STORM

I

IT was at the little hamlet of Pilhoël, one of the wildest on the coast of Brittany, savage in its environment of blue rocks, the rugged crests of which were reddened by the setting sun, with the sea, rampant like a chained lion, or furious and hurling its sonorous waves to the very thresholds of the houses above ; while, inland, the country was sheltered and smiling with flowers in all seasons, as in a greenhouse—a sunny zone, where camellias blossomed in the open air.

At that time Pilhoël was a corner unknown to tourists, and a few painters who went there to sketch took care not to lead thither the importunate crowd of fashionable people. Fifty houses at most, all inhabited by fishermen, stood under the shadow of the ruined church, the cracked bell of which frightened even the sea-gulls on the shore. During the working days of the week none but women with children hanging to their skirts were to be seen moving about between the dwelling-places. All the men were away fishing.

On Sundays their long nets were spread along the weather-stained white of the house-walls, holding in their meshes silver spangles which glittered in the light ; and there was a world of poor people, all resigned, pious, and knowing nothing of the unwholesome dreamings of city dwellers, but full of faith and courage.

There is in France—at least on the borders of the sea—no village, however humble, which has not its pearl of beauty. It was no untruth so to call Jeanne, the prettiest girl in Pilhoël. The humblest garments—for she was one of the poorest girls in the hamlet—could not disguise her inherent grace and beauty. Her superbly-designed bare feet, her little hands, which hard toil had often wounded, were signs unconquerable of natural aristocracy. Good and modest above all the girls about her, she had, none the less, a love-secret in her heart.

She was sixteen, and he whom she loved was four years older : a handsome youth who, equally with herself, felt the flow of noble blood in his veins. Something of instinctive worth was betrayed in

his least gestures, and a proud melancholy was strongly expressed in his face.' He was skilful in his calling, and bravest of the brave ; with all that, a dreamer, taking little part in the Sunday sports on the square in front of the church, but oftener, at the hour when Jeanne was listening to the vespers and singing the verses, re-entering the holy building, and at the foot of a pillar contemplating her in the shadow scarcely penetrated by the yellow rays of the altar candles ; or wandering away to the deserted sea-shore to think of her, the music of the waves seeming to bear away to far-off horizons the frail bark of his unspoken hopes.

What was it separated these two human beings, so completely made to unite their laborious and resigned existence ? Their common poverty. Both were orphans. Loëhic had earned his scanty living in service on the boats, and only at last had been able to buy one for himself, and such a boat !—the oldest and most sea-battered of the little fleet.

As to Jeanne, she had been reared by her old Aunt Mathurine, who had brought her up with infinite tenderness, but at the same time promising herself not to allow her niece to marry any but a man who would be in a position to assure her (Mathurine) a comfortable provision for her old age. For there is always a basis of selfishness in our devotion.

This man she had chosen without saying anything about it : it was Mathias, the pilot, who was looked up to by the whole fishing community of the little hamlet. A rough man, with his weather-beaten face and hands of bronze, yet hale and hearty in spite of his fifty years ; who had often faced Death, from whom he had snatched his intended victims ; and who had made enough fortune to insure his ease and allow him to retire from his perilous calling. He had known Jeanne in her infancy, had danced her on his knees, and had seen her grow with increasing and affectionate interest. And Mathurine, who had the natural sharpness of all peasants, had guessed that the old pilot was in love with this flower of grace, slowly expanding under his eyes.

But Mathias was no fool, and when he thought of his age he laughed at himself, and again became paternal with the young girl, who, innocent creature, had never even suspected the combat that was being waged in the old sailor's heart. With him she was always the same—simple, frank, and sometimes cruelly charming ; admiring him, but in the way in which patriarchs are venerated.

All her tenderness was reserved for Loëhic, and, knowing that her

aunt was opposed to her marriage with him, she had resolved to remain unwed rather than become the wife of any other man. She had sworn it to him one evening when they had met upon the shore in the soft moonlight, broken by the sea into a rain of gold ; at one of those mysterious hours, sweet to lovers, when their hearts seem to open widest to solemn confidences, when their souls bathe deliciously in the same concert of abandonment and sincerity ; she had even placed upon his finger a ring in remembrance of her promise—a poor brass ring, but one which Monseigneur the bishop had blessed at the last confirmation.

“ Before God I am your betrothed,” she had said to him, all her soul vibrating in her voice, “ and death alone can part my thoughts from yours ! ”

And both had melted into tears, the bitter drops of which ran down to their lips, mingling with the salt vapours rising from the waves and the tossing seaweeds of the shore. And from the shelter of a block of granite in the moorland he had plucked a wild flower and given it to her, and she had placed it between two leaves of her poor “ Book of Hours,” the face towards a picture of the Virgin bearing this epigraph : “ *Ave maris stella.*” And she turned her eyes towards a star, on the golden eyelashes of which a tear of pity seemed to tremble.

Both had moved away, overcome by this idyll, but confident in each other, expecting nothing of men, but everything from some marvellous and heavenly intervention, which would not permit the future viewed by them with a like tenderness to be for ever destroyed, or that such a dream as theirs should be the eternal despair of their lives.

After that supreme interview, existence had, so to speak, returned to them. Loëhic every day, without rest or truce, risked his life in his miserable boat for trifling gains ; and Jeanne repaired the nets of old or unmarried fishermen for a small piece of money, which Aunt Mathurine dropped into the throat of a nearly empty purse.

II

There was a festival that day at Pilhoël. The pilot, Mathias, had solemnly retired. He had said farewell to the fleet he had commanded, and his old companions, to do him honour, and in gratitude for the services he had rendered them, had organised a series of rejoicings.

As soon as it was daylight they went to his cottage to play the drum and fire guns and pistols under his windows. Then the maidens brought him a large bouquet, which was presented by Jeanne ; which made the old sailor's tanned face blush as red as a peony with pleasure. Then full cups of the best cider—which had been bottled months before in anticipation of the event—were drained, and the glory of the old pilot commemorated in song.

Loëhic had not been the least active in all these proceedings ; for he felt towards Mathias a childlike admiration mixed with a confiding sympathy. Many times he had been on the point of confessing to him his tenderness for Jeanne and asking his advice—for how could he for a moment imagine that venerable Mathias had ever regarded her with other than fatherly feelings ? At twenty, people think those who are fifty years of age veritable Methuselahs.

As was proper, this touching ceremony was not left without its comic side. This was secured to it by Aunt Mathurine, by the offering of a pair of slippers embroidered by herself—a garden in tapestry, with roses resembling cabbages and birds that might readily be mistaken for gnats : for Mathurine had in her youth been in service in one of the large towns, and had acquired genteel accomplishments. The old sailor, who had never in his life worn anything but sabots, felt an enormous temptation to burst into a roar of laughter.

“ If it makes no difference to you, Mathurine,” he said, “ I'll wear 'em on my hands in winter-time, to play the dandy in at the High Mass.”

And, by way of thanks, he clapped on the old girl's two cheeks a pair of such hearty kisses as, for a moment, made her teeth rattle in her head like castanets.

Everybody had that morning made holiday for this rejoicing, which was followed by a copious repast, and ended with a rigadon, accompanied by Mathurine on the guitar—a superannuated instrument which had been given to her by one of her old employers, and which distilled under her meagre fingers some vinegary notes, falling drop by drop, as it were, into the tormented ear. But they had no refined notions as to music at Pilhoël, and so this performance of Aunt Mathurine, embroidered by the gruntings of a bagpipe, played by a lad whose execution had come to him naturally and wholly without study, seemed to all who heard it as charming as any music could be.

All this revelling had filled the morning down to one o'clock, and

the time was then come for putting off to sea, to make up for the early lost hours of the day.

It was in the month of September, and the forenoon had been particularly bright. The sun had risen over the ocean in mist, which had speedily been consumed by its rays and had melted, like the last cloud of smoke at a conflagration, into the rosy light. The intense azure of the zenith paled down to the horizon, where the blue of the sea blended with that of the sky in a long kiss—the insensible line between reality and dream, between the region of stars and the region of tempests.

The mild air—too warm, perhaps, for the season—was scarcely tintured with salt, but laden with the life-giving perfumes, the nourishing breath of the immense living thing which breathes along the land and warms it with the beatings of its heart. On seeing the few tiny copper clouds which the dawn had rapidly driven before it, some of the weather-prophets had said that the day would not pass without a storm.

But this threat seemed to have withdrawn behind the glittering curtains of the firmament, and in the gaieties of Mathias's *fête* had passed from the minds of all. Joyously, therefore, the sails had been unbound from the masts, dressed with flags for the occasion, when, suddenly and unexpectedly, they were caught by a rude puff of wind and filled even before they were completely spread, while a violet-hued vapour rose above the horizon, presently shaping itself into a long, slate-coloured blade, widening itself obliquely, and cutting the azure sky as with a shadowy knife.

"There'll be a tempest presently!" said Mathias. "Take care of yourselves, boys!"

"Ah! you have done well to quit the business, my good Mathias!" Aunt Mathurine murmured softly in his ear.

Jeanne looked sadly on while Loëhic adjusted, as well as he could, the rough and torn sail which, like a wounded wing, was to bear him out to sea. His soul was heavily oppressed by melancholy. When he had wished to dance with Jeanne, old Mathurine had made at him through her diabolical spectacles such a pair of eyes that he had not dared to invite the young girl. At table, before that, they had been placed as far as possible apart from each other; so that what had been a pleasure to everybody else, had been for him nothing but a punishment.

Never had he felt so completely downcast. So, when passing near him, while her aunt was offering a pinch of snuff to Mathias, Jeanne had said to him :

“ Don’t go out to sea, my Loëhic, I beg of you ! ”

The only reply he had been able to make to her was :

“ Oh, let me go !— I wish to die.”

III

A heavy gloom poisoned the departure after the gaiety of the morning, and many a furtive tear mingled with the farewells along the range of boats into which the men were climbing, to go in quest of the daily bread for which they daily prayed.

The prediction of Mathias had troubled the minds of the most courageous ; the old pilot knew so well the ocean and its treasons ! But all had solid boats, and well fitted to withstand the onslaughts of the waves. Then, they were not going far out, but meant to content themselves with fishing within sight of the coast, ready for a prompt return, in case the winds and waves should prove too hostile. Loëhic alone, in his shattered boat, would run any real danger.

“ Take my better boat, lad,” said Mathias, with rough tenderness.

But, for the first time, the poor young fellow had noticed the old man’s assiduities to Jeanne, and with what fond eyes he had gazed upon her, and he answered, shortly :

“ No, thank you ; I don’t want it.”

And with a last look, charged with agony, cast upon his loved one, he threw himself into his leaky boat, and his tattered sail, filling with the rest, bore him away. The wind grew every moment stronger, and one by one the boats disappeared into the violet mist, their grey sails looking to the end like the wings of frightened gulls.

Mathias and Mathurine had retired into the cottage of the latter, who had prevailed on him to partake of a last pitcher of cider ; for she could think of no better artifice for drawing to her house the only nephew she could hope to secure in this country, so far removed from the shores of Pactolus. Moreover, the moment appeared to her an excellent one for making a first trial. The old sailor had given up the sea ; it was the very time for him to take to himself a wife. Jeanne was the prettiest girl in Pilhoël ; Mathias was the richest fisherman there.

These two aristocracies were made for one another evidently. The match-maker, therefore, set about diplomatising, commencing the campaign by a significant enumeration of her niece's virtues: she augured well from the enthusiasm with which Mathias declared that she had still fallen short of the truth.

During this conversation, in which she was so much concerned, Jeanne had remained on the sea-shore, anxiously, and with moistened eyes, peering into the horizon overspread by a dark curtain which had at length veiled the whole sky. Suddenly this veil was torn by a flash of lightning, skimming the dense green surface of the sea afar off; followed by a scarcely perceptible rumble, after a long interval. The storm was yet distant.

But she already felt its commotions, and a chill fell on her heart. The light had faded out of the sky. Heavy drops of rain fell upon the sands, tinting them grey. A fresh zig-zag of fire rent the air, reflecting itself on the face of the deep water, and the voice of the thunder immediately followed.

Jeanne uttered a cry of agony.

"We had better go and see what it was, perhaps," said Mathias, emptying a last glass of cider to the health of Jeanne.

"Nonsense—stay where you are," said Mathurine, restraining him.

Like a flight of pigeons regaining the dovecots, pressing closely one against the other, white, and rapidly increasing in size, the sails of the fishermen appeared, all low upon the water, all flying before and under the stress of the tempest. A third burst of thunder had brought all the women and children in terror to the beach.

In spite of Mathurine, Mathias had hurried down to the shore, his rough face expressing a strange anxiety. This one and that one uttered cries of relief and joy on receiving those belonging to them. The wind came in aid of the courage of the sailors; a powerful gust threw the whole fleet on to the shore in safety.

On all sides kisses, embracings, sobs of joy, hand-graspings of friends lost and restored. One sail alone was behind—a rag of canvas on a raft, for the gunwale of the boat had all been torn away by the waves; and against it the figure of a young man struggling to keep it standing against the fury of the wind. Jeanne recognised in him Loëhic, and, with blanched features and clenched hands, felt as if Death had laid his hands upon her.

"He is lost!" was the cry of all.

"There is only one man who can save him!" cried a fisherman.

"Mathias, alone, could make head against such a sea!" cried another.

Mathias had already stripped off his waistcoat and thrown it on the ground. He was going to launch his own boat.

"Unhappy man—I forbid you!" screamed Mathurine, clinging to the pilot's shirt-sleeve.

Mathias looked at Jeanne.

There are moments, solemn, mysterious, when language becomes useless, when souls understand each other in silence, when hearts open themselves, dumb, but readable as widespread books. The young girl went to the pilot and said to him, in a voice so low that none but he could hear her:

"Save him, and I will be your wife."

For that look—that one look—had, in an instant, revealed to her the pilot's passion.

With a vigorous movement, Mathias threw off Mathurine—so vigorous, indeed, that her clutch carried away with it a shred of the shirt-sleeve on which it had been fastened—and sprang into his boat, already moving out through the surf. A turn of the helm—a white furrow in the sea—then a cry of agony and admiration!

The storm raged more furiously than ever. The old pilot's boat had reached Loëhic's shattered vessel in the midst of a cloud of spray, which at moments hid both from view. The mingled forms of two men stood out against the grey tumultuous background—Mathias holding Loëhic, insensible, in his stalwart arms. The double shadow stoops—the shadow of a single man rises: Mathias has laid in the bottom of his own boat the body of the man he has saved. Another turn of the helm, and in a few seconds the rescuer lands the still insensible form of Loëhic on the beach.

A ringing outburst of hurrahs!—the horny hand of the old pilot passed from lip to lip; his name murmured by all mouths in benediction. The women on their knees put up thanks to the Virgin also.

Jeanne, pale, motionless as death; Mathias turns upon her a look appealing for thanks. A pained smile passes to the young girl's lips, and Mathurine makes everybody laugh by breathlessly bringing to the pilot a glass of hot sugared wine, which, in spite of all the old girl's

protestations, he insists on forcing between the lips of Loëhic, who has not yet returned to consciousness.

IV

At the end of six weeks, Loëhic, saved and sheltered by Mathias, has slowly recovered the reason of which for awhile he had been bereft by excess of emotion. After many days of delirium, during which his life had been in suspense, consciousness had returned to his mind, but on his heart had fallen the shadow of an incurable sadness.

Mathurine had only permitted Jeanne to come and see him once ; and Mathias—strange as it seemed—had not sought to break through that cruel decree, but appeared to be completely in agreement on the subject. The reason was that in his sick dreams poor Loëhic had so often repeated the name of Jeanne, and with such despairing tenderness in the tones of his voice, that the old pilot feared he had discovered that love existed between them. Jeanne, whom he saw every day at her aunt's, appeared, however, firmly resolved to keep her promise. She had allowed her hand to be officially asked of Mathurine, and, without making the least objection, proceeded with the preparation of her trousseau.

The young girl listened to the pilot's projects of happiness without responding, but with a vague smile upon her lips which he might take for contentment.

One day she was kneeling in prayer as he entered, and in rising let a faded flower fall from the "Book of Hours." Mathias stooped for the purpose of picking it up and returning it to her ; but before he could reach it she had snatched it up and jealously hidden it in her bosom.

The eagerness of her action attracted the old sailor's attention.

"Who gave you that flower ?" he asked, uneasily, without knowing why.

"Loëhic gave it to me."

And, as a look of anguish passed into the pilot's eyes, she added :

"God does not forbid remembrance."

Mathias did not insist, but a terrible doubt had entered his heart. An hour later, on taking his place by the bed of Loëhic, now convalescent, he said to the young man :

"How would you answer me, Loëhic, if I, who have saved your life, were to ask something of you in return ?"

" I should answer you : ' Mathias, my life is yours ; dispose of it as you please.' "

After an interval of painful silence, and with a faltering voice, the pilot continued :

" It is not much I have to ask of you, lad ; give me only the worthless brass ring you always wear on your finger."

Loëhic started in his bed and became very pale.

" That ? Never ! " he cried, an angry light flashing from his eyes.

" It was Jeanne, then, who gave it to you ? " replied Mathias, his voice choking with pain.

" *Why* do you ask me, since you know ? " rejoined Loëhic, closing his eyes and overcome by this sudden trial of emotion.

The pilot rose, his eyes full of tears. He kissed the forehead of the young man, who had fallen suddenly into a kind of sleep. He listened, and assured himself that he was really sleeping.

" Forgive me ! " he murmured.

Then, in a corner of the room, before a crucifix, he knelt and besought God to give him courage. Calmed, a look of admirable resignation on his brow, he put on his heavy woollen cap and returned to the house of Mathurine, whom he found working with feverish ardour at the white bridal dress.

" Well—will the trousseau be ready soon ? " he cried, in a voice which he rendered almost rough from trying too much to make it gay.

" You have become very pressing all of a sudden, Master Mathias," replied Aunt Mathurine. " For when do you want it ? "

Very simply, this time, in the admirable tone of sacrifice, the pilot answered, looking at Jeanne :

" For when Loëhic is well again."

ALPHONSE DAUDET

1840-1897

THE POPE'S MULE

OF all the clever sayings, proverbs, or saws with which our Provence peasants embellish their discourse, I know of none more picturesque or more peculiar than this. Within a radius of fifteen leagues of my mill, when anybody mentions a spiteful, vindictive man, he will say: "Look out for that man! he is like the Pope's mule, that keeps her kick for seven years."

I tried for a long time to find out the source of that proverb, what that Papal mule might be, and that kick kept for seven years. No one here was able to give me any information on that subject, not even Francet Mamaï, my fife-player, who, however, has the whole legendary history of Provence at his finger-ends. Francet agrees with me that there is probably some old tradition of Provence behind it; but he has never heard it mentioned except in the proverb.

"You won't find that anywhere except in the Grasshoppers' Library," said the old fifer, with a laugh.

I thought the suggestion a good one, and as the Grasshoppers' Library is right at my door, I shut myself up there for a week.

It is a wonderful library, splendidly stocked, open to poets day and night, the attendants being little librarians with cymbals, who play for you all the time. I passed some delightful days there, and after a week of investigation—on my back—I ended by discovering what I wanted to know, that is to say, the story of my mule and of that famous kick stored up for seven years. The tale is a pretty one, although slightly ingenuous, and I am going to try to tell it to you as I read it yesterday morning in a manuscript of the colour of the weather, which had a pleasant smell of dry lavender, with long gossamer-threads for book-marks.

He who never saw Avignon in the time of the Popes has seen nothing. Never was there such a city for gaiety, life, animation, and a succession of *fêtes*. There were, from morning till night, processions, pilgrimages, streets strewn with flowers and carpeted with magnificent tapestries, cardinals arriving by the Rhône, with banners flying; gaily bedecked

galleys, the soldiers of the Pope singing in Latin on the squares, and the bowls of mendicant friars ; and then, from roof to cellar of the houses that crowded humming about the great Papal palace, like bees about their hive, there was the tick-tack of the lace-makers' looms, the rapid movement of the shuttles weaving gold thread for the vestments, the little hammers of the carvers of burettes, the keyboards being tuned at the lute-makers', the songs of the sempstresses ; and, overhead, the clang of the bells, and always a tambourine or two jingling down by the bridge. For with us, when the common people are pleased, they must dance and dance ; and as the streets in the city in those days were too narrow for the farandole, the fifes and the tambourines stationed themselves on Avignon Bridge, in the cool breezes from the Rhône ; and there the people danced and danced, day and night. Ah ! the happy days ! the happy city ! Halberds that did not wound, state prisons where they put wine to cool. No famine ; no wars. That is how the Popes of the Comtat governed the people ; that is why the people regretted them so bitterly.

There was one especially, a good old fellow, whom they called Boniface. Ah ! how many tears were shed in Avignon when he died ! He was such a good-natured affable prince ! He laughed so heartily from the back of his mule ! And when you passed him—though you were simply a poor little digger of madder, or the provost of the city—he would give you his blessing so courteously ! He was a genuine Pope of Yvetot, but of a Provençal Yvetot, with a something shrewd in his laughter, a sprig of marjoram in his biretta, and never a sign of a Jeanneton. The only Jeanneton that the old man had ever been known to have was his vineyard, a tiny vineyard which he had planted himself, three leagues from Avignon, among the myrtles of Château Neuf.

Every Sunday, after vespers, the excellent man went to pay court to it ; and when he was there, seated in the warm sun, with his mule by his side and his cardinals lying at the foot of the stumps all about, then he would order a bottle of native wine opened—that fine ruby-coloured wine which was called afterwards the Château Neuf of the Popes—and he would drink it in little sips, looking at his vineyard with a tender expression. Then, when the bottle was empty and the day drew to a close, he would return merrily to the city, followed by all his chapter ; and when he rode over Avignon Bridge, through the drums and farandoles, his mule, stirred by the music, would fall into a little

skipping amble, while he himself marked the time of the dance with his cap, which scandalised his cardinals terribly, but caused the people to say : " Ah ! the kind prince ! Ah ! the dear old Pope ! "

Next to his vineyard at Château Neuf, the thing that the Pope loved best on earth was his mule. The good man fairly doted on the beast. Every night before going to bed he would go to see if his stable was securely fastened, if anything was lacking in the crib ; and he never rose from the table until a huge bowl of wine *à la Française*, with plenty of sugar and spices, had been prepared under his own eye, which he carried to the mule himself, despite the comments of his cardinals. It should be said, too, that the beast was worth the trouble. It was a fine black mule, dappled with red, sure-footed, with a glossy coat, a broad, full rump ; and she carried proudly her slender little head, all bedecked with plumes, and ribbons, and silver bells and streamers ; and as gentle as an angel withal, with a mild eye and two long ears always in motion, which gave her a most amiable aspect. All Avignon respected her, and when she passed through the streets there was no attention which the people did not pay her ; for they all knew that that was the best way to be in favour at court, and that, with her innocent look, the Pope's mule had led more than one to wealth ; witness Tistet Védène and his wonderful adventures.

This Tistet Védène was in truth an impudent rascal, whom his father, Guy Védène, the gold-carver, had been obliged to turn out of his house, because he refused to do any work and led the apprentices astray. For six months he was seen dragging his jacket through all the gutters of Avignon, but principally in the neighbourhood of the Papal palace ; for the rogue had had for a long while a scheme of his own about the Pope's mule, and you will see what a mischievous scheme it was.

One day, when his Holiness all alone was riding by the ramparts on his steed, behold my Tistet approaches him, and says, clasping his hands with an air of admiration :

" Ah ! *mon Dieu* ! what a fine mule you have, Holy Father ! Just let me look at her. Ah ! what a lovely mule, my Pope ! the Emperor of Germany has not her like."

And he patted her and spoke softly to her, as to a maiden :

" Come, my jewel, my treasure, my pearl."

And the excellent Pope, deeply moved, said to himself :

" What a nice little fellow ! How nice he is with my mule ! "

And what do you suppose happened the next day? Tistet Védène exchanged his old yellow jacket for a fine lace alb, a violet silk hood, and shoes with buckles; and he entered the household of the Pope, to which only sons of nobles and nephews of cardinals had ever been admitted. That is what intrigue leads to! But Tistet Védène did not stop there. Once in the Pope's service, the rascal continued the game that had succeeded so well. Insolent with everybody else, he reserved his attention and care for the mule alone; and he was always to be seen in the courtyard of the palace, with a handful of oats or a bunch of clover, whose purple clusters he shook as he glanced at the Holy Father's balcony, as if he would say: "Look! for whom is this?" The result was that the excellent Pope finally, feeling that he was growing old, left it to him to look after the stable and to carry the mule her bowl of wine *à la Française*; which did not make the cardinals laugh.

Nor the mule either—it did not make her laugh. Now, when the time for her wine arrived, she always saw five or six little clerks of the household enter her stable and hastily bury themselves in the straw with their hoods and their lace; then, after a moment, a delicious odour of caramel and spices filled the stable, and Tistet Védène appeared, carefully carrying the bowl of wine *à la Française*. Then the poor beast's martyrdom began.

That perfumed wine which she loved so dearly, which kept her warm, which gave her wings, they had the fiendish cruelty to bring to her manger, to let her inhale it, and then, when her nostrils were full of it, off it went! the beautiful rose-coloured liquor disappeared down the throats of those young rogues. And if they had only contented themselves with stealing her wine! but all those little clerks were like devils when they had been drinking. One pulled her ears, another her tail; Quiquet mounted her back, Béluguet tried his cap on her head, and not one of the scamps reflected that with a sudden kick the excellent beast could have sent them all into the polar star, or even farther. But no! not for nothing is one the Pope's mule, the mule of benedictions and indulgences. Let the boys do what they would, she did not lose her temper, and she bore a grudge to Tistet Védène alone. But he—when she felt him behind her, her hoofs fairly itched, and in good sooth there was reason for it. That ne'er-do-well of a Tistet played her such cruel tricks! He conceived such fiendish ideas after drinking!

Would you believe that one day he took it into his head to make her go up with him into the belfry, away up to the highest point of the palace ! And this that I am telling you is not a fable—two hundred thousand Provençals saw it. Just imagine the terror of that wretched beast, when, after twisting blindly about for an hour on a winding staircase, and climbing I know not how many stairs, she suddenly found herself on a platform dazzling with light ; and a thousand feet below her, a whole fantastic Avignon, the stalls in the market no larger than walnuts, the Pope's soldiers in front of their barracks like red ants, and yonder, over a silver thread, a little microscopic bridge where the people danced and danced. Ah ! the poor creature ! what a panic ! All the windows in the palace shook with the bray that she uttered.

" What's the matter ? What are they doing to her ? " cried the good Pope, rushing out upon the balcony.

" Ah ! Holy Father, this is what's the matter ! Your mule—*mon Dieu !* what will become of us !—your mule has gone up into the belfry."

" All alone ? "

" Yes, Holy Father, all alone. See ! look up there. Don't you see the ends of her ears hanging over, like two swallows ! "

" Merciful Heaven ! " exclaimed the poor Pope, raising his eyes. " Why, she must have gone mad ! Why, she will kill herself ! Will you come down here, you wretched creature ? "

Pécaïre ! She would have asked nothing better than to have come down ; but how ? As to the staircase, that was not to be thought of ; it is possible to go up such things ; but in going down there is a chance to break one's legs a hundred times. And the poor mule was in despair ; as she wandered about the platform with her great eyes filled with vertigo, she thought of Tistet Védène.

" Ah ! You villain, if I escape, what a kick to-morrow morning ! "

That idea of a kick restored a little of her courage ; save for that, she could not have held out. At last they succeeded in taking her down ; but it was a difficult task. They had to lower her in a litter, with ropes and a jack-screw. And you can imagine what a humiliation it was for the Pope's mule to be suspended at that height, swinging about with her hoofs in the air, like a butterfly at the end of a string. And all Avignon looking at her !

The wretched beast did not sleep that night. It seemed to her all the time that she was walking about on that infernal platform, with the city laughing below her · then she thought of that infamous Tistet

Védène, and of the dainty kick that she proposed to give him in the morning. Ah ! my friends, what a kick ! they would see the smoke at Pampérigouste.

Now, while this pleasant reception was in store for him at the stable, what do you suppose Tistet Védène was doing ? He was going down the Rhône, singing, on one of the Pope's galleys, on his way to the Court of Naples, with a party of young nobles whom the city sent every year to Queen Joanna, for training in diplomacy and in refined manners. Tistet was not of noble birth ; but the Pope desired to reward him for the care he had bestowed upon his mule, and above all for the activity he had displayed during the day of rescue.

Imagine the mule's disappointment the next morning !

" Ah ! the villain ! he suspected something ! " she thought, as she shook her bells savagely ; " but never mind, you scoundrel ! you shall have it when you come back, that kick of yours ; I will keep it for you ! "

And she did keep it for him.

After Tistet's departure, the mule resumed her quiet mode of life and her former habits. No more Quiquet or Béluguet in her stable. The blissful days of wine *à la Française* had returned, and with them good-humour, the long siestas, and the little dancing step when she crossed Avignon Bridge. Since her misfortune, however, she was always treated rather coldly in the city. People whispered together as she passed ; the old folks shook their heads, and the children laughed as they pointed to the belfry. Even the worthy Pope himself had not his former confidence in his friend, and when he allowed himself to take a little nap on her back, on Sundays, when he returned from his vineyard, he always had this thought : " Suppose I should wake up on the platform up there ! "

The mule saw that and she was unhappy over it, although she said nothing ; but when the name of Tistet Védène was mentioned in her presence, her long ears quivered, and with a short laugh she would sharpen the iron of her little shoes on the pavement.

Seven years passed thus ; and then, at the end of those seven years, Tistet Védène returned from the Court of Naples. His time there was not at an end ; but he had learned that the Pope's chief mustard-bearer had died suddenly at Avignon, and as the office seemed to him a good one, he returned in great haste to apply for it.

When that schemer of a Védène entered the great hall of the palace,

the Holy Father had difficulty in recognising him, he had grown so tall and so stout. It should be said also that the Pope had grown old too, and that he could not see well without spectacles.

Tistet was not frightened.

"What? don't you recognise me, Holy Father? It is Tistet Védène."

"Védène?"

"Why, yes, you know, the one who used to carry French wine to your mule."

"Oh, yes! I remember. A good little fellow, that Tistet Védène! And what does he want of us now?"

"Oh! a mere nothing, Holy Father. I came to ask you—by the way—have you still your mule? And is she well? Good!—I came to ask you for the place of the chief mustard-bearer, who has just died."

"You, chief mustard-bearer! why, you are too young. How old are you?"

"Twenty years and two months, illustrious pontiff; just five years older than your mule. Ah! blessed palm of God! the excellent beast! If you only knew how I loved that mule! how I sighed for her in Italy!—Won't you let me see her?"

"Yes, my child, you shall see her," said the kind-hearted Pope, deeply touched. "And as you are so fond of the excellent beast, I propose that you shall live near her. From this day I attach you to my person as chief mustard-bearer. My cardinals will make an outcry, but so much the worse! I am used to it. Come to us to-morrow, when vespers is done, and we will deliver the symbols of your office, in the presence of our chapter, and then—I will take you to see the mule, and you shall come to the vineyard with us both. Ha! ha!—Now go!"

If Tistet Védène was pleased when he left the great hall, I need not tell you how impatiently he awaited the ceremony of the morrow. Meanwhile, there was some one in the palace still happier than he and even more impatient; that was the mule. From the hour of Védène's return until vespers of the following day, the bloodthirsty creature did not cease stuffing herself with oats, and kicking at the wall with her hind feet. She, too, was preparing for the ceremony.

On the morrow, then, when vespers was at an end, Tistet Védène entered the courtyard of the Papal palace. All the high clergy were there, the cardinals in their red robes, the advocate of the devil in black

velvet, the convent abbés with their little mitres, the churchwardens of the Saint-Agrico, the violet hoods of the household, the lower clergy too, the Pope's soldiers in full uniform, the three brotherhoods of penitents, the hermits from Mount Ventoux with their fierce eyes, and the little clerk who walks behind them carrying the bell, the Flagellants naked to the waist, the red-faced sacristans in gowns like judges—all, yes, all, even to those who hand the holy-water, and he who lights and he who extinguishes the candles; not one was missing. Ah! it was a grand installation! Bells, fireworks, sunlight, music, and, as always, those mad tambourine-players leading the dance yonder on Avignon Bridge.

When Védène appeared in the midst of the assemblage, his presence and his handsome face aroused a murmur of admiration. He was a magnificent Provençal, of the blond type, with long hair curled at the ends and a small, unruly beard which resembled the shavings of fine metal from the graving-tool of his father the goldsmith. The report was current that the fingers of Queen Joanna had sometimes toyed with that light beard; and Sire de Védène had in truth the vain-glorious air and the distraught expression of men whom queens have loved. That day, to do honour to his nation, he had replaced his Neapolitan clothes by a jacket with a pink border *à la Provençale*, and in his hood floated a long plume of the Camargue ibis.

Immediately upon his entrance, the chief mustard-bearer bowed with a noble air, and walked toward the high daïs, where the Pope awaited him, to deliver the symbols of his office: the spoon of yellow wood and the saffron-coloured coat. The mule was at the foot of the staircase, all saddled and ready to start for the vineyard. When he passed her, Tistet Védène smiled affably and stopped to pat her two or three times in a friendly way on the back, looking out of the corner of his eye to see if the Pope noticed him. The position was excellent. The mule let fly:

“There! take that, you villain! For seven years I have been keeping it for you!”

And she gave him a terrible kick, so terrible that the smoke of it was seen from far Pampérigouste, an eddying cloud of blond smoke in which fluttered an ibis feather—all that remained of the ill-fated Tistet Védène!

A mule's kick is not ordinarily so disastrous; but she was a Papal mule; and then, think of it! she had kept it for him for seven years. There is no finer example of an ecclesiastical grudge.

THE GOAT OF MONSIEUR SEGUIN

ALPHONSE DAUDET

To M. Pierre Gringoire, Lyrical Poet at Paris

YOU will always be the same, my poor Gringoire !
Think of it ! you are offered the place of reporter on a respectable Paris newspaper, and you have the assurance to refuse ! Why, look at yourself, unhappy youth ! look at that worn-out doublet, those dilapidated breeches, that gaunt face, which cries aloud that it is hungry. And this is where your passion for rhyme has brought you ! this is the result of your ten years of loyal service among the pages of my lord Apollo ! Aren't you ashamed, finally ?

Be a reporter, you idiot ; be a reporter ! You will earn honest crowns, you will have your special seat at Brébant's, and you will be able to appear every first night with a new feather in your cap.

No ? You will not ? You propose to remain perfectly free to the end ? Well ! just listen to the story of Monsieur Seguin's goat. You will see what one gains by attempting to remain free.

Monsieur Seguin had never had good luck with his goats. He lost them all in the same way ; some fine morning they broke their cord and went off to the mountain, and there the wolf ate them. Neither their master's petting, nor fear of the wolf, nor anything else deterred them. They were, it would seem, independent goats, determined to have fresh air and liberty at any price.

Honest Monsieur Seguin, who was unable to understand the temperament of his beasts, was dismayed. He said :

" I am done ; the goats are bored at my house, and I won't keep another one."

However, he did not get discouraged, and after losing six goats all in the same way, he bought a seventh ; but that time he was very careful to buy a very young one, so that it would be more likely to become accustomed to living with him.

Ah ! Monsieur Seguin's little kid was such a pretty thing, Gringoire ! with her soft eyes, her little beard like a subaltern's, her

gleaming black hoofs, her striped horns, and her long white hair, which formed a sort of greatcoat ! She was almost as lovely as Esmeralda's goat—do you remember, Gringoire ? And then, so docile, too, and affectionate, allowing herself to be milked without moving, without putting her foot into the pail. A perfect little love of a kid !

Monsieur Seguin had an enclosure behind his house, surrounded by hawthorn. There he placed his new boarder. He fastened her to a stake, in the place where the grass was the richest, taking care to give her a long rope ; and from time to time he went to see if she was all right. The kid was very happy, and browsed with such zest that Monsieur Seguin was overjoyed.

“ At last,” thought the poor man, “ I have one that will not be bored here ! ”

Monsieur Seguin was mistaken ; his kid was bored.

One day she said to herself, looking up at the mountain :

“ How happy they must be up there ! what pleasure to gambol about in the heather, without this infernal cord that galls one's neck ! It is all right for the donkey or the ox to graze in an enclosed place, but goats need plenty of room.”

From that moment the grass in the enclosure seemed distasteful. Ennui assailed the kid. She grew thin, her milk became scanty. It was painful to see her pulling at her cord all day long, with her head turned towards the mountain, her nostrils dilated, and bleating sadly.

Monsieur Seguin noticed that something was the matter with the kid, but he did not know what it was. One morning as he finished milking her, the kid turned her head and said to him in her dialect :

“ Listen, Monsieur Seguin ; I am dying in your enclosure ; let me go to the mountain.”

“ Ah ! *mon Dieu* ! this one, too ! ” cried Monsieur Seguin in stupefaction ; and the shock caused him to drop his pail ; then, seating himself on the grass beside his kid, he said :

“ What, Blanquette, do you want to leave me ? ”

And Blanquette replied :

“ Yes, Monsieur Seguin.”

“ Haven't you enough grass here ? ”

“ Oh, yes ! Monsieur Seguin.”

“ Perhaps you are tied too short ; do you want me to lengthen the rope ? ”

“ It isn't worth while, Monsieur Seguin.”

"What is it that you want, then?"

"I want to go to the mountain, Monsieur Seguin."

"Why, you wretched creature, don't you know that there is a wolf in the mountain? What will you do when he comes?"

"I will butt him with my horns, Monsieur Seguin."

"The wolf doesn't care for your horns. He has eaten goats with horns much longer than yours. Don't you remember poor Renaude who was here last year? A fine goat, as strong and ill-tempered as any he-goat. She fought with the wolf all night, and then in the morning the wolf ate her."

"*Pécaïre!* poor Renaude! but that doesn't make any difference to me, Monsieur Seguin; let me go to the mountain."

"Divine mercy!" exclaimed Monsieur Seguin; "what on earth does somebody do to my goats? Still another one that the wolf will end by eating! But no! I will save you in spite of yourself, you hussy! and as I am afraid that you will break your rope, I am going to shut you up in the stable, and you shall always stay there."

Thereupon Monsieur Seguin carried the kid to a dark stable, the door of which he locked securely. Unluckily he forgot the window, and he no sooner had his back turned than the little creature took her leave.

Do you laugh, Gringoire? Parbleu! of course you do; you are of the faction of the goats, against poor Monsieur Seguin. We will see if you laugh in a moment.

When the white kid arrived in the mountain there was general rejoicing. Never had any of the old fir-trees seen anything so pretty. They welcomed her like a little queen. The chestnuts bent to the ground to caress her with their branches. The golden heather opened for her to pass, and gave forth the sweetest perfume that it could. The whole mountain celebrated her arrival.

You can imagine, Gringoire, whether our kid was happy! No more ropes, no more stakes, nothing to prevent her from gambolling and grazing at her pleasure. That was the place where the grass grew! above the tips of her horns, my dear fellow! And such grass! fine and sweet, made up of a thousand different plants. It was a very different thing from the grass in the enclosure. And the flowers—great blue bell-flowers, purple foxgloves with long stamens, a whole forest of wild flowers, overflowing with intoxicating juices.

The white kid, half tipsy, played about there with her legs in the

air, and rolled down the slopes, with the falling leaves and the chestnuts ; then, of a sudden, she sprang to her feet with one leap. Away she went, with her head thrust forward, through the under-brush and the thickets, sometimes on a peak, sometimes in the bottom of a ravine, up and down and everywhere. You would have said that there were ten of Monsieur Seguin's kids in the mountain.

The fact is that Blanquette was afraid of nothing. She crossed with one bound broad torrents which spattered her, as she passed, with misty spray and foam. Then, dripping wet, she stretched herself out on a flat rock and allowed the sun to dry her. Once, as she crept to the edge of a plateau with some clover in her teeth, she spied below her, in the plain, Monsieur Seguin's house with the enclosure behind it. That made her laugh until she cried.

"How tiny it is!" she said; "how was I ever able to live there?"

Poor dear! finding herself perched up there so high, she believed herself to be at least as large as the world.

In fact that was a great day for Monsieur Seguin's kid. About mid-day, as she ran to right and left, she happened upon a band of chamois which were busily engaged in eating wild grapes. Our little white-robed vagrant created a sensation. They gave her the best place at the vine, and those gentlemen were all very gallant. Indeed it seems—this between ourselves, Gringoire—that a young chamois with a black coat had the good fortune to please Blanquette. The two lovers lost themselves in the woods for an hour or two, and if you would know what they said to each other, go ask the chattering streams that flow invisibly under the moss.

Suddenly the wind freshened. The mountain turned purple; it was evening.

"Already!" said the little kid; and she stopped, much surprised.

The fields below were drowned in mist. Monsieur Seguin's enclosure disappeared in the haze, and of the cottage she could see only the roof, with a thread of smoke. She listened to the bells of a flock being driven home, and her heart was heavy. A falcon, flying homeward, brushed her with his wings as he passed. She started. Then there arose a howl in the mountain:

"Hou! hou!"

She thought of the wolf; during the day the wild creature had not given him a thought. At the same moment a horn blew in the valley. It was good Monsieur Seguin making a last effort.

"Hou ! hou !" howled the wolf.

"Come back ! come back !" cried the horn.

Blanquette longed to go back ; but when she remembered the stake, the rope, and the hedge about the enclosure, she thought that she could never again become accustomed to that life, and that it was better to stay where she was.

The horn ceased to blow.

The kid heard a rustling of leaves behind her. She turned and saw in the darkness two short, straight ears and two gleaming eyes. It was the wolf.

He sat there on his haunches, enormous, motionless, gazing at the little white kid and licking his chops in anticipation. As he felt sure that he should eat her, the wolf was in no hurry ; but when she turned, he began to laugh wickedly.

"Ha ! ha ! Monsieur Seguin's little kid !" and he passed his great red tongue over his lean chops.

Blanquette felt that she was lost. For a moment, as she remembered the story of old Renaude, who had fought all night only to be eaten in the morning, she thought that it would be better to be eaten then ; then, thinking better of it, she stood on guard, her head down and her horns forward, like the brave Seguin goat that she was. Not that she had any hope of killing the wolf—kids do not kill wolves—but simply to see if she could hold out as long as Renaude.

Thereupon the monster came forward and the little horns began to play.

Ah ! the dear little kid, how courageously she went at it ! More than ten times—I am not lying, Gringoire—she compelled the wolf to retreat in order to take breath. During these momentary respites, the little glutton hastily plucked another blade of her dear grass ; then she returned to the battle with her mouth full. This lasted all night. From time to time Monsieur Seguin's kid glanced at the stars dancing in the clear sky and said to herself :

"Oh ! if only I can hold out until dawn !"

One after another the stars went out. Blanquette fought with redoubled fury with her horns, the wolf with his teeth. A pale gleam appeared on the horizon. The hoarse crowing of a cock came up from a farm.

"At last !" said the poor creature, who was only awaiting the dawn

to die ; and she lay down in her lovely white coat all spotted with blood.

Thereupon the wolf threw himself upon the little kid and ate her.

Adieu, Gringoire !

The story you have heard is not a fable of my invention. If ever you come to Provence our farmers will often speak to you of " the goat of Monsieur Seguin, that fought the wolf all night, and then, in the morning, the wolf ate her up."

You understand, Gringoire :

" And then, in the morning, the wolf ate her up."

OLD FOLKS

ALPHONSE DAUDET

“ **A** LETTER, Father Azan ? ”

“ Yes, monsieur, it comes from Paris.”

He was as proud as a peacock that it came from Paris, was excellent Father Azan. But not I. Something told me that that Parisian epistle from Rue Jean-Jacques, falling upon my table unexpectedly and so early in the morning, would make me lose my whole day. I was not mistaken ; see for yourself :

“ You must do me a favour, my friend. You must close your mill for one day and go at once to Eyguières—Eyguières is a large village three or four leagues from you, just a pleasant walk. On arriving there, you will ask for the orphan convent. The next house to the convent is a low house with grey shutters, and a small garden behind. You will go in without knocking—the door is always open—and as you enter, you will say in a very loud voice : ‘ Good day, my good people ! I am Maurice’s friend ! ’ Then you will see two old folks—oh ! very old, immeasurably old—who will hold out their arms to you from the depths of their great easy-chairs, and you will embrace them for me, with all your heart, as if they were your own people. Then you will talk ; they will talk about me ; nothing but me ; they will tell you a thousand foolish things, which you will listen to without laughing.—You won’t laugh, will you ?—They are my grandparents, two people whose whole life I am, and who have not seen me for ten years. Ten years is a long while ! but what can you expect ? Paris holds me tight, and their great age holds them. They are so old, that if they should come to see me they would fall to pieces on the way. Luckily, you are in the neighbourhood, my dear miller, and, while embracing you, the poor people will think that they are embracing me to some extent. I have so often written to them of you and of the warm friendship——”

The devil take our friendship ! It happened to be magnificent weather that morning, but not at all appropriate for walking on the road ; too much mistral and too little sunshine—a genuine Provençal day. When that infernal letter arrived, I had already chosen my

cagnard (place of shelter) between two rocks, and I was dreaming of staying there all day, like a lizard, drinking light, and listening to the song of the pines. However, what was I to do? I closed the mill, grumbling, and put the key under the door. My stick and my pipe, and I was off.

I reached Eyguières about two o'clock. The village was deserted; every soul was in the fields. Under the elms of the farmyards, white with dust, the grasshoppers were singing as in the heart of Crau. There was an ass taking the air on the square, in front of the mayor's office, and a flock of pigeons on the church fountain; but no one to point out to me the way to the orphanage. Luckily an old fairy appeared of a sudden, sitting in her doorway and spinning. I told her what I was looking for; and as that fairy was very powerful, she had only to raise her distaff: instantly the orphan convent rose before me as if by magic. It was a high, gloomy, dark building, proud to be able to show, above its ogive doorway, an old cross of red sandstone with some Latin words around it. Beside it, I saw another smaller house. Grey shutters and a garden behind. I recognised it instantly, and I entered without knocking.

As long as I live I shall never forget that long, quiet, cool corridor, with its pink walls, the little garden quivering at the rear through a curtain of light colour, and over all the panels faded flowers and lyres. It seemed to me as if I were entering the house of some old bailiff of the days of Sedaine. Through a half-opened door at the end of the corridor, on the left, I could hear the ticking of a big clock, and the voice of a child, but of a child of school age, reading and pausing after each word: "Then—St.—I-re-næ-us—cried—I—am—the—grain—of—the—Lord.—I—must—be—ground—by—the—teeth—of—these—an-i-mals."

I approached the door softly and looked in.

In the peaceful half-light of a small bedroom, a good old man with red cheeks, wrinkled to the ends of his fingers, was sleeping in an easy-chair, with his mouth open and his hands on his knees. At his feet a little girl dressed in blue—big cape and little cap, the costume of the convent—was reading the life of St. Irenæus from a book larger than herself. That miraculous reading had produced its effect upon the whole household. The old man was sleeping in his chair, the flies on the ceiling, the canaries in their cage at the window. The great clock snored, tick-tack, tick-tack. There was nothing awake in the whole

chamber save a broad band of light which entered, straight and white, through the closed shutters, full of living sparks and microscopic waltzes. Amid the general drowsiness, the child gravely continued her reading: "In-stan-ty—two—li-ons—rushed—up—on—him—and—ate—him—up." It was at that moment that I entered. The lions of St. Irenæus rushing into the room would not have produced greater stupefaction than I did. A genuine stage effect! The little girl shrieked, the great book fell, the flies and canaries woke, the clock struck, the old man sat up with a start, greatly alarmed, and I myself, slightly disturbed, halted in the doorway and shouted very loud:

"Good day, good people! I am Maurice's friend."

Oh, if you had seen the poor old man then; if you had seen him come towards me with outstretched arms, embrace me, shake my hands, and run wildly about the room, exclaiming:

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!"

Every wrinkle in his face laughed. His cheeks flushed, and he stammered:

"Ah! monsieur; ah! monsieur."

Then he hurried towards the end of the room, calling:

"Mamette! Mamette!"

A door opened, there was a mouselike tread in the hall; it was Mamette. Nothing could be prettier than that little old woman, with her shell-shaped bonnet, her nun's gown, and the embroidered handkerchief which she held in her hand, to do me honour, after the ancient fashion. It was a most touching thing—they actually resembled each other. With a tower of hair and yellow shells, he too might have been named Mamette. But the real Mamette must have wept bitterly during her life, and she was even more wrinkled than the other. Like the other, too, she had with her a child from the orphanage, a little nurse in a blue cape, who never left her; and to see those two people cared for by those two orphans was the most touching picture that one could imagine.

When she came in, Mamette began by making me a low reverence, but the old man cut it in two by a word:

"This is Maurice's friend."

Instantly she began to tremble and weep, she lost her handkerchief, turned red, red as a peony, even redder than he. Those old people had but a single drop of blood in their veins, and at the slightest emotion it rushed to their faces.

"Quick, quick, a chair!" said the old woman to her little one.

"Open the shutters," cried the old man to his.

And, each taking me by a hand, they trotted to the window, which was thrown wide open that they might the better see me. The easy-chairs were brought, and I stationed myself between them on a folding-chair, the little blue girls behind us, and the questioning began.

"How is he? What is he doing? Why doesn't he come to see us? Is he happy?" and *patati!* and *patata!* that sort of thing for hours.

For my part, I answered all their questions to the best of my ability, giving such details concerning my friend as I knew, and unblushingly inventing those that I did not know; above all, being careful not to confess that I had never noticed whether his window closed tightly, or what colour the paper was on the walls of his bedroom.

"The paper of his bedroom! it is blue, madame, a light blue, with flowers."

"Really?" said the poor old woman, deeply moved; and she added, turning towards her husband: "He is such a good boy!"

"Oh, yes; he is a good boy!" said the other, enthusiastically.

And all the time I was talking, they exchanged little nods of the head, little sly laughs, and winks, and significant glances; or else the old man would stoop over and say to me:

"Speak louder. She's a little hard of hearing."

And she, on her side:

"A little louder, please! he doesn't hear very well."

Thereupon I would raise my voice; and both would thank me with a smile; and in those faded smiles, leaning towards me, seeking in the depths of my eyes the image of their Maurice, I, for my part, was deeply moved to find that image in theirs—vague, veiled, almost intangible, as if I saw my friend smiling at me, a long way off, in a mist.

Suddenly the old man sat erect in his chair.

"Why, it just occurs to me, Mamette—perhaps he has not breakfasted!"

And Mamette, in dismay, tossed her arms into the air:

"Not breakfasted! Great Heaven!"

I thought that they were still talking about Maurice, and I was about to reply that that excellent youth never waited later than noon for his breakfast. But no, they were talking about me; and you

should have seen the commotion when I confessed that I was still fasting.

"Lay the table quick, my little blues; the table in the middle of the room, and the Sunday cloth, the flowered plates. And let's not laugh so much, if you please; and make haste."

I should say that they did make haste. They had hardly had time to break three plates when the breakfast was ready.

"A nice little breakfast," said Mamette, as she led me to the table, "but you will be all alone. 'We have already eaten this morning.'"

Poor old people! at no matter what time you take them, they have always eaten that morning.

Mamette's nice little breakfast consisted of two fingers of milk, some dates, and a *barquette*, something like a shortcake; enough to support her and her canaries for at least a week. And to think that I alone consumed all those provisions! What indignation about the little table! How the little blues whispered as they nudged each other; and yonder in their cage, how the canaries seemed to say to each other: "Oh! see that gentleman eating the whole *barquette*!"

I did eat it all, in truth, and almost without noticing it, occupied as I was in looking about that light, peaceful room, where the air was filled with an odour as of ancient things. Above all, there were two little beds from which I could not remove my eyes. Those beds, almost cradles, I imagined as they looked in the morning at daybreak, when they were still hidden behind their great French curtains. The clock strikes three. That is the hour when all old people wake.

"Are you asleep, Mamette?"

"No, my dear."

"Isn't Maurice a nice boy?"

"Oh! he is a nice boy, indeed."

And I imagined a long conversation like that, simply from having seen those two little beds standing side by side.

Meanwhile, there was a terrible drama taking place at the other end of the room, before the cupboard. It was a matter of reaching on the top shelf a certain jar of brandied cherries, which had been awaiting Maurice ten years, and which they desired to open in my honour.

Despite the entreaties of Mamette, the old man had insisted upon going to get the cherries himself; and, having mounted a chair, to his wife's great alarm, he was trying to reach them. You can imagine the picture—the old man trembling and standing on tiptoe, the little

blues clinging to his chair, Mamette behind him, gasping, with outstretched arms, and over all a faint perfume of bergamot, which exhaled from the open cupboard and from the great piles of unbleached linen. It was delightful.

At last, after many efforts, they succeeded in taking the famous jar from the cupboard, and with it an old silver cup, all marred and dented, Maurice's cup when he was small. They filled it for me with cherries to the brim; Maurice was so fond of cherries! and while serving me the old man whispered in my ear with the air of an epicurean:

"You are very lucky, you are, to have a chance to eat them. My wife made them herself. You are going to taste something good."

Alas! his wife had made them, but she had forgotten to sweeten them. What can you expect? People become absent-minded as they grow old. Your cherries were atrocious, my poor Mamette. But that did not prevent me from eating them to the last one, without a wink.

The repast at an end, I rose to take leave of my hosts. They would have been glad to keep me a little longer, to talk about the good boy; but the day was drawing to a close, the mill was far away, and I must go.

The old man rose as I did.

"My coat, Mamette. I am going with him to the square."

Surely Mamette believed in her heart that it was already a little cool for him to escort me to the square, but she made no sign. However, while she was helping him to put his arms into the sleeves of his coat, a fine coat of the colour of Spanish snuff, I heard the dear creature whisper to him:

"You won't stay out too late, will you?"

And he, with a little sly look:

"Ha! ha! I don't know—perhaps."

At that they looked at each other with a laugh, and the little blues laughed to see them laugh, and the canaries in their corner laughed also in their way. Between ourselves, I believe that the odour of the cherries had intoxicated them all a little.

The night was falling when the grandfather and I went out. The little blue followed us at a distance, to take him home; but he did not see her, and he was as proud as possible to walk on my arm, like a man. Mamette, with radiant face, saw that from her doorstep, and as she watched us, she nodded her head prettily, as if to say:

"Never mind, he can still walk, my poor old man!"

THE TWO INNS

ALPHONSE DAUDET

I WAS returning from Nîmes one July afternoon. The heat was overwhelming. The scorching white road stretched out as far as the eye could see, a dusty line, between gardens of olive-trees and of scrub-oaks, beneath a huge sun of dull silver, which filled the whole sky. Not a sign of shade, not a breath of wind. Nothing save the vibration of the hot air, and the shrill cry of the grasshoppers, a mad, deafening music, at a hurried tempo, which seemed the very resonance of that boundless, luminous vibration. I had been walking through this desert for two hours, when suddenly a group of white houses detached itself from the dust of the road before me. It was what is called the relay of St. Vincent: five or six farmhouses, long, red-roofed barns, a watering-trough without water, in a clump of meagre fig-trees, and, on the outskirts of the hamlet, two large inns looking at each other from opposite sides of the street.

There was something striking in the proximity of those two inns. On one side, a large new building, full of life and animation, all the doors thrown open, the diligence stopping in front, the steaming horses being unharnessed, the passengers drinking hastily on the road, in the short shadow of the walls; the courtyard crowded with mules and vehicles; carters lying under the sheds, awaiting the cool of the evening. Within, outcries, oaths, blows of fists on the tables, the clinking of glasses, the clicking of billiard-balls, the popping of corks, and above all that uproar, a jovial, ringing voice, singing so loud that the windows shook:

“ Pretty little Margoton,
As soon as dawn was waking,
Took her silver pitcher,
And went off to the well.”

The inn opposite, on the contrary, was silent and seemed deserted. Grass under the gateway, shutters broken, over the door a rusty twig of holly hanging like an old plume, the door-step strewn with stones from the road. It was all so poverty-stricken, so pitiful, that it seemed an act of charity to stop there and drink a glass.

On entering, I found a long room, deserted and dismal, which the dazzling light, entering through three curtainless windows, rendered even more dismal and deserted. A few rickety tables, on which stood broken glasses dull with dust, a dilapidated billiard-table, holding out its four pockets as if asking alms, a yellow couch, an old desk, slumbered there in an oppressive and unhealthy heat. And the flies! flies everywhere! I had never seen so many: on the ceiling, clinging to the windows, in the glasses, in swarms. When I opened the door, there was a buzzing, a humming of wings as if I were entering a hive.

At the end of the room, in a window-recess, there was a woman standing close to the window, busily occupied in looking out. I called her twice:

"Ho there! hostess!"

She turned slowly, and showed me the face of a poverty-stricken peasant woman, wrinkled and furrowed, earth-coloured, framed by long lappets of rusty lace, such as the old women in our neighbourhood wear. She was not an old woman, though; but much weeping had faded her completely.

"What do you want?" she asked, wiping her eyes.

"To sit down a moment and drink something."

She gazed at me in amazement, without moving from her place, as if she did not understand me.

"Isn't this an inn?"

The woman sighed.

"Yes, it is an inn, if you choose. But why don't you go opposite, like all the rest? It is much more lively."

"It is too lively for me. I prefer to stay here with you."

And without waiting for her reply, I seated myself at the table.

When she was quite sure that I was speaking seriously, the hostess began to go and come with a very busy air, opening doors, moving bottles, wiping glasses, and disturbing the flies. It was clear that a guest to wait upon was an important event. At times the unhappy creature would stop and take her head in her hands, as if she despaired of ever accomplishing anything.

Then she went into the rear room; I heard her shaking great keys, fumbling with locks, looking into the bread-box, blowing, dusting, washing plates. From time to time a deep sigh, a sob ill stifled.

After a quarter of an hour of this business, I had before me a plate

of raisins, an old loaf of Beaucaire bread. as hard as sandstone, and a bottle of sour new wine.

"You are served," said the strange creature; and she turned back at once to her place at the window.

As I drank, I tried to make her talk.

"You don't often have people here, do you, my poor woman?"

"Oh, no! never any one, monsieur. When we were alone here, it was different; we had the relay, we provided hunt-dinners during the ducking-season, and carriages all the year round. But since our neighbours set up in business we have lost everything. People prefer to go opposite. They consider it too dull here. It's a fact that the house isn't very pleasant. I am not good-looking, I have fever and ague, and my two little girls are dead. Over yonder, on the contrary, they are laughing all the time. It is a woman from Arles who keeps the inn, a handsome woman with laces, and three bands of gold beads round her neck. The driver of the diligence, who is her lover, takes it to her place. And then she has a lot of hussies for chambermaids, so that she gets lots of custom! She has all the young men from Bezouces, Redessan, and Jonquières. The carters go out of their way to pass her house. And I stay here all day without a soul, eating my heart out."

She said this in a distraught, indifferent tone, with her forehead still resting against the glass. There was evidently something which interested her at the inn opposite.

Suddenly, on the other side of the road, there was a great commotion. The diligence moved off through the dust. I heard the cracking of the whip, the postillion's bugle, and the girls who had run to the door calling out:

"*Adiousias! adiousias!*" And over it all the stentorian voice that I had heard before, beginning again, louder than ever:

"She took her silver pitcher,
And went off to the well;
From there she could not see
Three soldiers drawing near."

At that voice the hostess trembled in every limb, and, turning to me, she said in an undertone:

"Do you hear? That's my husband. Doesn't he sing well?"

I gazed at her in stupefaction.

"What? Your husband? Do you mean to say that he goes there too?"

Thereupon, with a heart-broken air, but with the utmost gentleness, she replied :

“ What can you expect, monsieur ? Men are made that way ; they don't like to see people cry ; and I cry all the time since my little girls died. And then this great barrack, where nobody ever comes, is so melancholy. And so, when he is bored too much, my poor José goes across the road to drink, and as he has a fine voice, the woman from Arles makes him sing. Hush ! there he goes again.”

And she stood there, as if in a trance, trembling, with her hands outstretched, and tears rolling down her cheeks, which made her look uglier than ever, to hear her José singing for the woman from Arles :

“ The first one said to her :
‘ Good day, my pretty dear ! ’ ”

THE ELIXIR OF FATHER GAUCHER

ALPHONSE DAUDET

“**D**RINK this, neighbour, and tell me what you think of it.”

And drop by drop, with the painstaking care of a lapidary counting pearls, the curé of Graveson poured out for me two fingers of a golden-green, warm, sparkling, exquisite liqueur. My stomach was as if bathed in sunlight.

“ This is Father Gaucher’s elixir, the joy and health of our Provence,” said the worthy man, with a triumphant air ; “ it is made at the convent of Prémontrés, two leagues from your mill. Isn’t it better than all the chartreuses on earth ? And if you knew how interesting the story of this elixir is ! Listen.”

Thereupon, as artlessly as possible, without the slightest tinge of irony, in that parsonage dining-room, so placid and calm, with its *Road to the Cross* in tiny pictures, and its pretty light curtains ironed like surplices, the abbé began a somewhat sceptical and irreverent anecdote, after the fashion of a tale of Erasmus or d’Assoucy.

“ Twenty years ago, the Prémontrés, or the White Fathers, as we Provençals call them, had fallen into utter destitution. If you had seen their convent in those days it would have made your heart ache.

“ The high wall, the Pacôme Tower, were falling in pieces. All around the grass-grown cloisters the pillars were cracked, the stone saints crumbling in their recesses. Not a stained-glass window whole, not a door that would close. In the courtyards, in the chapels, the wind from the Rhône blew as it blows in Camargue, extinguishing the candles, breaking the leaden sashes of the windows, spilling the water from the holy-water vessels. But the saddest of all was the convent belfry, silent as an empty dove-cote ; and the fathers, in default of money to buy a bell, were obliged to ring for matins with clappers of almond-wood !

“ Poor White Fathers ! I can see them now, in the procession on Corpus Christi, pacing sadly along in their patched hoods, pale and thin, fed on pumpkins and water-melons ; and behind them monseigneur

the abbé, marching with downcast head, ashamed to exhibit in the sunlight his tarnished crook and his worm-eaten mitre of white wool. The ladies of the fraternity wept with compassion in the ranks, and the stout banner-bearers whispered sneeringly to one another as they pointed to the poor monks :

“ ‘ The starlings grow thin when they fly in flocks.’ ”

“ The fact is, the unfortunate White Fathers had reached the point where they asked themselves if they would not do better to fly out into the world and to seek pasturage each for himself.

“ Now, one day when this grave question was being discussed in the chapter, the prior was informed that Brother Gaucher desired to be heard in the council. I must say for your information that this Brother Gaucher was the drover of the convent ; that is to say, he passed his days waddling from arch to arch through the cloister, driving before him two consumptive cows, which tried to find grass between the cracks of the flagstones. Supported until he was twelve years old by an old madwoman of the Baux country, called Aunt Bégon, then taken in by the monks, the wretched drover had never been able to learn anything except to drive his beasts and to repeat his paternoster ; and even that he said in Provençal, for his brain was thick and his mind as dull as a leaden dagger. A fervent Christian, however, although somewhat visionary, comfortable in his haircloth shirt, and inflicting discipline upon himself, with sturdy conviction, and such arms !

“ When they saw him come into the chapter-hall, simple and stupid of aspect, saluting the assemblage with a leg thrown back, prior, canons, steward, and everybody began to laugh. That was always the effect produced by that good-natured face with its grizzly, goatlike beard and its slightly erratic eyes, whenever it appeared anywhere ; so that Brother Gaucher was not disturbed thereby.

“ ‘ Reverend fathers,’ he said in a wheedling voice, playing with his chaplet of olive-stones, ‘ it is quite true that empty casks make the best music. Just imagine that, by dint of cudgelling my poor brain, which was already so hollow, I believe that I have thought out a way to help us out of our poverty.

“ ‘ This is how. You know Aunt Bégon, that worthy woman who took care of me when I was small—God rest her soul, the old hag ! she used to sing some very vile songs after drinking.—I must tell you then, reverend fathers, that Aunt Bégon in her lifetime knew as much

about the mountain herbs as an old Corsican blackbird, and more. In fact, towards the end of her life, she compounded an incomparable elixir by mixing five or six kinds of simples that we picked together in the mountains. That was a good many years ago ; but I believe that, with the aid of St. Augustine and the permission of our worshipful abbé, I might, by careful search, discover the composition of that mysterious elixir. Then we should only have to bottle it and sell it at a rather high price, to enable the community to get rich as nicely as you please, like our brothers of La Trappe and La Grande——'

" He was not allowed to finish. The prior sprang to his feet and fell upon his neck. The canons seized his hands. The steward, even more deeply moved than all the rest, kissed respectfully the ragged edge of his cowl. Then they all returned to their chairs to deliberate ; and the chapter decided on the spot that the cows should be entrusted to Brother Thrasybule, so that Brother Gaucher might devote himself exclusively to the compounding of his elixir.

" How did the excellent monk succeed in discovering Aunt Bégon's recipe ! At the price of what efforts, of what vigils ? History does not say. But this much is sure, that after six months the elixir of the White Fathers was very popular. Throughout the Comtat, in all the Arles country, there was not a farmhouse, not a granary, which had not in the depths of its buttery, amid the bottles of mulled wine and the jars of olives *à la picholine*, a little jug of brown earthenware, sealed with the arms of Provence, and with a monk in a trance on a silver label. Thanks to the popularity of its elixir, the convent of the Prémontrés grew rich very rapidly. The Pacôme Tower was rebuilt. The prior had a new mitre, the church some pretty stained windows ; and in the fine open-work of the belfry a whole legion of bells, large and small, burst forth one fine Easter morning, jingling and chiming with all their might.

" As for Brother Gaucher, that unfortunate lay brother, whose rustic manners amused the chapter so much, was never spoken of in the convent. Henceforth they only knew the Reverend Father Gaucher, a man of brains and of great learning, who lived completely apart from the trivial and multifarious occupations of the cloister, and was shut up all day in his distillery, while thirty monks hunted the mountain for him, seeking fragrant herbs. That distillery, which no one, not even the prior, had the right to enter, was an old abandoned

chapel, at the end of the canons' garden. The simplicity of the worthy fathers had transformed it into something mysterious and redoubtable ; and if by chance some audacious and inquisitive young monk happened to get as far as the rosework of the doorway, he retreated very quickly, terrified by the aspect of Father Gaucher, with his sorcerer's beard, leaning over his furnaces, scales in hand ; and all about him retorts of red sandstone, huge alembics, serpentine glasses, a whole strange outfit, flaming as if bewitched, in the red gleam of the stained glass.

" At nightfall, when the last Angelus rang, the door of that abode of mystery would open softly, and the father would betake himself to the church for the evening service. You should have seen the welcome that he received when he passed through the monastery ! The brethren drew up in two lines for him to pass. They said to one another :

" ' Hush ! he knows the secret ! ' "

" The steward followed him and spoke to him with downcast eyes. Amid all this adulation, the father walked along, mopping his forehead, his broad-brimmed, three-cornered hat placed on the back of his head like a halo, glancing with an air of condescension at the great courtyards full of orange-trees, the blue roofs surmounted by new weather-vanes ; and, in the cloister, glaringly white between the gracefully carved pillars, the monks, newly dressed, marching two by two with placid faces.

" ' They owe all this to me ! ' the father would say to himself ; and every time that thought caused his bosom to swell with pride.

" The poor man was well punished for it, as you will see.

" Imagine that one evening, during the service, he arrived in the church in a state of extraordinary excitement : red-faced, breathless, his hood awry, and so perturbed that when he took his holy water he wet his sleeves to the elbow. They thought at first that his excitement was due to being late ; but when they saw him make profound reverences to the organ and the galleries instead of saluting the main altar, when they saw him rush through the church like a gust of wind, wander about the choir for five minutes looking for his stall, and, when once seated, bow to the right and left with a beatific smile, a murmur of amazement ran through the three naves. From breviary to breviary the monks whispered :

“ ‘What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher? What can be the matter with our Father Gaucher?’ ”

“ Twice the prior, in his annoyance, struck his crook on the flagstones to enjoin silence. In the choir the psalms continued; but the responses lacked vigour.

“ Suddenly, in the very middle of the *Ave verum*, lo and behold Father Gaucher fell backward in his stall and chanted in a voice of thunder:

“ ‘In Paris there is a White Father—
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban.’ ”

“ General consternation. Everybody rose.

“ ‘Carry him away! he is possessed!’ they cried.

“ The canons crossed themselves. Monseigneur’s crook waved frantically. But Father Gaucher neither saw nor heard anything; and two sturdy monks were obliged to drag him away through the small door of the choir, struggling like one bewitched and continuing his *patatans* and his *tarabans* louder than ever.

“ The next morning, at daybreak, the poor wretch was on his knees in the prior’s oratory, confessing his sin with a flood of tears.

“ ‘It was the elixir, monseigneur, it was the elixir that took me by surprise,’ he said, beating his breast. And seeing him so heart-broken, so penitent, the good prior was deeply moved himself.

“ ‘Come, come, Father Gaucher, calm yourself; all this will dry up like the dew in the sunshine. After all, the scandal was not so great as you think. To be sure, there was a song which was a little—however, we must hope that the novices did not hear it. Now, tell me just how the thing happened to you. It was while you were trying the elixir, was it not? Your hand was a little too heavy. Yes, yes, I understand. It was like Brother Schwartz, the inventor of powder; you were the victim of your invention. And tell me, my dear friend, is it really necessary that you should try this terrible elixir upon yourself?’ ”

“ ‘Unluckily, yes, monseigneur. The test-tube, to be sure, gives me the strength and degree of heat of the alcohol; but for the finishing touch, the velvety smoothness, I can trust nothing but my tongue.’ ”

“ ‘Ah! very good. But listen to what I ask. When you taste the elixir thus as a duty, does it taste good to you? Do you enjoy it?’ ”

“ ‘Alas! yes, monseigneur,’ said the unhappy father, turning as red as a beet; ‘for two evenings now I have found such a bouquet,

such an aroma in it ! It is certainly the devil who has played me this vile trick. So I have determined only to use the test-tube henceforth. If the liqueur is not as fine, if it is not as smooth as before, so much the worse ! ’

“ ‘ Do nothing of the sort,’ interrupted the prior earnestly. ‘ We must not take the risk of displeasing our customers. All that you have to do now that you are warned is to be on your guard. Tell me, how much do you need to drink, for your test ? Fifteen or twenty drops, is it not ? Let us say twenty drops. The devil will be very smart if he can catch you with twenty drops. Moreover, to avert all chance of accident, I excuse you from coming to church henceforth. You will repeat the evening service in the distillery. And now, go in peace, my father, and above all things count your drops carefully.’ ”

“ Alas ! the poor father counted his drops to no purpose ; the demon had him in his clutch, and he did not let him go.

“ The distillery heard some strange services !

“ In the daytime everything went well. The father was tranquil enough ; he prepared his retorts, his alembics, carefully assorted his herbs—all Provençal herbs, fine and grey, and burned with perfume and sunlight. But at night, when the simples were steeped and the elixir was cooling in great basins of red copper, the poor man’s martyrdom began.

“ ‘ Seventeen, eighteen, nineteen, twenty.’ ”

“ The drops fell from the tube into the silver goblet. Those twenty the father swallowed at one draught, almost without enjoyment. It was only the twenty-first that aroused his longing. Oh ! that twenty-first drop ! To avoid temptation, he would go and kneel at the end of the laboratory and bury himself in his paternosters. But from the still warm liqueur there ascended a wreath of smoke heavily laden with aromatic odours, which came prowling about him, and drew him back towards the basins, whether he would or no. The liqueur was a beautiful golden green. Leaning over it, with distended nostrils, the father stirred it gently with his tube, and it seemed to him that he saw, in the sparkling little spangles on the surface of the emerald lake, Aunt Bégon’s eyes laughing and snapping as they looked at him.

“ ‘ Nonsense ! just one more drop ! ’ ”

“ And from drop to drop the poor wretch ended by filling his

goblet to the brim. Then, at the end of his strength, he would sink down in an easy-chair ; and his body relaxed, his eyes half closed, he would enjoy his sin by little sips, murmuring to himself with ecstatic remorse :

“ ‘ Ah ! I am damning myself ! I am damning myself ! ’

“ The most terrible part of it was, that in the depths of that diabolical elixir he remembered, by some witchery or other, all Aunt Bégon’s naughty songs : ‘ There were three little gossips, who talked of giving a feast ’ ; or, ‘ Master André’s shepherdess goes to the woods alone ’ ; and always the famous one of the White Fathers : ‘ Patatin, patatan ! ’

“ Imagine his confusion the next day when his old neighbours said to him with a sly expression :

“ ‘ Ha ! ha ! Father Gaucher, you had grasshoppers in your head when you went to bed last night. ’

“ Then there were tears, despair, fasting, haircloth, and penance. But nothing could prevail against the demon of the elixir ; and every evening at the same hour the possession began anew.

“ Meanwhile, orders rained upon the abbey like a blessing from Heaven. They came from Nîmes, from Aix, from Avignon, from Marseilles. From day to day the convent assumed the aspect of a factory. There were packing brothers, labelling brothers, brothers to attend to the correspondence, drayman brothers ; the service of God lost a few strokes of the bell now and then, to be sure, but the poor people of the neighbourhood lost nothing, I assure you.

“ But one fine Sunday morning, while the steward was reading to the chapter his annual inventory, and the good canons were listening with sparkling eyes and smiling lips, behold Father Gaucher rushed into the midst of the conference, exclaiming :

“ ‘ It is all over ! I can’t stand it any longer ! give me back my cows. ’

“ ‘ What is the matter, pray, Father Gaucher ? ’ asked the prior, who had a shrewd idea what the matter might be.

“ ‘ The matter, monseigneur ? The matter is that I am laying up for myself an eternity of hell-fire and blows with the pitchfork. The matter is that I am drinking, drinking like a miserable wretch. ’

“ ‘ But I told you to count your drops. ’

“ ‘ Count my drops ! Oh, yes ! I should have to count them by goblets now. Yes, my fathers, I have reached that point. Three

flasks an evening. You must see that that cannot last. So let whomsoever you choose make the elixir. May God's fire consume me if I touch it again !'

" The chapter laughed no longer.

" ' But you are ruining us, unhappy man !' cried the steward, waving his ledger.

" ' Do you prefer that I should damn myself for ever ?'

" Thereupon the prior rose.

" ' My fathers,' he said, putting forth his beautiful white hand, upon which the pastoral ring glistened, ' there is a way to arrange everything. It is at night, is it not, my dear son, that the demon tempts you ?'

" ' Yes, monsieur prior, regularly every evening. So now, when night comes, a cold sweat takes me, saving your presence, like Capitou's donkey when he saw the saddle coming.'

" ' 'Tis well ! be comforted. Henceforth every evening, at the service, we will repeat in your favour the prayer of St. Augustine, to which plenary indulgence is attached. With that, whatever happens, you are safe. It affords absolution during sin.'

" ' Oh, well ! in that case, thanks, monsieur prior !'

" And, without asking anything more, Father Gaucher returned to his laboratory, as light-hearted as a lark.

" And in truth, from that day forward, every evening at the end of the complines, the officiating father never failed to say :

" ' Let us pray for our poor Father Gaucher, who is sacrificing his soul in the interest of the community. *Oremus, Domine—*'

" And while the prayer ran quivering over those white hoods, prostrate in the shadow of the nave, as a light breeze rushes over the snow, yonder at the other end of the convent, behind the flaming stained glass of the distillery, Father Gaucher could be heard singing at the top of his lungs :

" ' In Paris there is a White Father,
Patatin, patatan, tarabin, taraban ;
In Paris there is a White Father
Who dances with the nuns,
Trin, trin, trin, in a garden,
Who dances with the——' "

Here the good curé stopped, in dismay.

" Merciful Heaven !" he exclaimed, " suppose my parishioners should hear me !"

THE POPE IS DEAD

ALPHONSE DAUDET

I PASSED my childhood in a large provincial town cut in two by a much-travelled, very restless river, where I early acquired a taste for wandering and a passion for life on the water. There was especially a corner of a certain wharf near a foot-bridge called St. Vincent, of which I never think, even to-day, without emotion. I see again the sign nailed to the end of a yard : *Cornet, boats to let* ; the little ladder going down into the water, slippery and blackened with moisture ; the fleet of little boats, freshly painted in bright colours, lying in a line at the foot of the ladder, swaying softly from side to side, as if made buoyant by the pretty names painted in white letters on their sterns : *The Humming-bird, The Swallow*, and so forth.

And then, among the long oars gleaming with white lead, which were drying against the bank, Father Cornet walking about with his pail of paint, his long brushes, his tanned, furrowed, wrinkled face, with a thousand little dimples, like the river on an evening when the wind is fresh ! Oh ! that Father Cornet ! He was the Satan of my existence, my sorrowful passion, my sin, and my remorse. What crimes he has caused me to commit, with his boats ! I stayed away from school, I sold my books. What would I not have sold for an afternoon of boating !

With all my books in the bottom of the boat, my jacket off, my hat thrown back, and the pleasant, fanlike breeze from the river in my hair, I clung tightly to my oars, drawing my eyebrows together to give myself the aspect of an old sea-wolf. As long as I was in the town, I kept to the middle of the river, at an equal distance from both banks, where the old sea-wolf might have been recognised. What a triumph to mingle with that great procession of boats, of rafts, of logs, of steamboats which glided by, skilfully avoiding one another, separated only by a narrow streak of foam ! There were heavy boats, which turned in order to make the most of the current, and thereby displaced a multitude of others.

Suddenly the wheels of a steamer would beat the water near me ;

or else a heavy shadow would fall upon me : the foresail of an apple-boat.

“ Out of the way, you little brat ! ” a hoarse voice would shout ; and I would struggle and sweat, entangled in the ceaseless going and coming of that life of the stream, which the life of the streets constantly crossed, on those bridges and foot-bridges which cast reflections of omnibuses over the strokes of the oars. And the current that was so strong under the arches ; and the eddies, the famous hole of La Mort-qui-trompe ! I tell you that it was no small matter to guide one’s self through that, with arms of twelve years and no one to hold the tiller.

Sometimes I had the luck to meet the *chain* there. I would quickly hook on at the end of those long lines of boats which it was towing, and with my oars idle, reaching out like soaring wings, I would let myself go with that silent swiftness which cut the river in long ribbons of foam, and made the trees on both banks and the houses on the quay hurry by. Before me, far, very far away, I could hear the monotonous beating of the screw, a dog barking on one of the tow-boats, where a thin thread of smoke rose from a low funnel ; and all that gave me the illusion of a long voyage, of real life on board ship.

Unluckily, these meetings with the *chain* were rare. Generally I had to row, and row in the hours when the sun was hottest. Oh, that noonday sun falling perpendicularly upon the river ! It seems to me that it burns me now. Everything glared and glistened. Through that blinding and sonorous atmosphere, which hovers over the waves and vibrates with their every movement, the short strokes of my oars, the tow-lines rising from the water all dripping, would cause vivid flashes of polished silver to pass. And I would row with my eyes closed. At times, on account of the vigour of my efforts and the rush of the water under my boat, I imagined that I was going very fast ; but on raising my head, I always saw the same tree, the same wall opposite me on the bank.

At last, by tiring myself out, I would succeed in leaving the city, all dripping and flushed with heat. The uproar of the cold baths, of the laundresses’ boats, of the landing-floats, diminished. The bridges stretched across the broadening river here and there. Suburban gardens, a factory chimney, were reflected in the water at intervals. Green islands trembled on the horizon. Then, unable to row any more, I would draw up against the bank, amid the reeds all buzzing

with life ; and there, overcome by the sun, fatigue, and the heavy heat that rose from the water studded with great yellow flowers, the old sea-wolf would bleed at the nose for hours at a time. My voyages never had any other end. But what would you have ? I called that delightful.

But the terrible part was the return to the town and home. In vain would I row back with all my strength ; I always arrived too late, long after the school was dismissed. The impression of the falling night, the first jets of gas in the fog, all augmented my fear and my remorse. The people who passed, returning tranquilly to their homes, aroused my envy ; and I would run along, with an aching head, full of sunshine and water, with the roaring of shells in my ears, and on my face the blush for the lie that I was going to tell.

For I had to tell one every time, to meet that terrible " Where have you been ? " which awaited me at the door. It was that question on my arrival that frightened me most. I had to reply on the spot, on my feet ; always to have a story ready, something to say, and something so surprising, so impressive, that the surprise cut short all the questioning. That gave me time to go in and to take breath ; and to attain that end, nothing cost too much. I invented terrible tales : revolutions, a whole quarter of the town on fire, the railway bridge fallen into the river. But the worst thing that I invented was this :

That evening I arrived home very late. My mother, who had been expecting me for an hour, was standing at the top of the stairs watching for me.

" Where have you been ? " she cried.

Tell me what deviltry a child's head may not hold. I had thought of nothing, prepared nothing. I had come too fast. Suddenly a wild idea passed through my head. I knew that the dear woman was very pious, as fervent a Catholic as a Roman, and I answered in all the breathlessness of intense emotion :

" O mamma ! If you knew ! "

" What ? What is it now ? "

" The Pope is dead. "

" The Pope is dead ! " exclaimed my poor mother, and she leaned against the wall, as pale as death. I hurried into my room, a little frightened by my success and the enormity of the lie. But I had the courage to maintain it to the end. I remember a dismal but pleasant

evening ; my father very serious, my mother crushed. They talked in undertones at the table. I lowered my eyes, but my escapade was so entirely buried in the general desolation that no one thought about it.

They vied with one another in citing some instance of the virtue of poor Pius IX. ; then, little by little, the conversation strayed back through the history of the popes. Aunt Rose spoke of Pius VII., whom she remembered very well to have seen in the south, in a post-chaise, between gendarmes. Somebody recalled the famous scene with the Emperor : *Comediante ! tragediante !* It was fully the hundredth time that I had heard that terrible scene described, always with the same intonations, the same gestures, and the stereotyped formula of family traditions which one generation bequeaths to another, and which never change, as childish and as purely local as convent stories.

However, it had never seemed so interesting to me.

I listened with hypocritical sighs, frequent questions, an assumed air of interest, and all the time I was saying to myself :

" To-morrow morning, when they learn that the Pope is not dead, they will be so glad that no one will have the courage to scold me."

Thinking thus, my eyes closed in spite of myself, and I had visions of little boats painted blue, with little corners of the Saone made drowsy by the heat, and long claws of water-spiders darting in every direction and cutting the glassy river like diamond-points.

THE LITTLE PIES

ALPHONSE DAUDET

I

THAT morning, which was a Sunday, Sureau, the pastry-cook on Rue Turenne, called his apprentice and said to him :

“ Here are Monsieur Bonnicar’s little pies ; go and take them to him and come back at once. It seems that the Versillais have entered Paris.”

The little fellow, who understood nothing about politics, put the smoking hot pies in the dish, the dish in a white napkin, and balancing the whole upon his cap, started off on a run for Île St. Louis, where M. Bonnicar lived. It was a magnificent morning, one of those bright, sunny May mornings which fill the fruit-shops with clusters of cherries and bunches of lilac. Despite the distant cannonading and the bugle-calls at the corners of the streets, that whole ancient quarter of the Marais retained its peaceful aspect. There was Sunday in the air ; bands of children in the yards, tall girls playing battledore in front of the door, and that little white silhouette, trotting along in the middle of the deserted roadway, amid a pleasant odour of hot pies, put the finishing touch of artlessness and Sunday merriment to that morning of battle. All the life of the quarter seemed to have betaken itself to Rue de Rivoli. Cannon were being drawn thither and barricades thrown up ; groups of people at every step, National Guardsmen full of business. But the little pastry-cook did not lose his head. Those children are so accustomed to walking in the midst of crowds and the uproar of the street ! On saints’ days and holidays, when the streets are so crowded, early in the year, and on Sundays, they have the most running to do ; so that revolutions hardly surprise them.

It was really pleasant to see the little white cap dodge about amid the helmets and bayonets, avoiding collisions, maintaining its equilibrium, sometimes very rapidly, sometimes with a compulsory slowness in which one was conscious still of a longing to run. What difference did the battle make to him ? The important thing was to arrive at Bonnicar’s on the stroke of noon, and to run away at once

with the little fee which awaited him on the small table in the reception-room.

Suddenly there was a terrible pressure in the crowd, and wards of the Republic passed at the double-quick, singing. They were lads of twelve to fifteen years, arrayed in helmets, red belts, and high boots ; as proud of being disguised as soldiers as when they run about on Mardi gras with paper caps and a strip of a fancy pink umbrella, in the mud of the boulevards. This time, in the midst of the crowd, the little pastry-cook had much difficulty in keeping his balance ; but his dish and he had slipped so many times upon the ice, had played so many games of hop-scotch on the sidewalk, that the little pies escaped with a fright. Unluckily that excitement, those songs, those red belts, combined with admiration and curiosity, aroused in the apprentice the desire to march a little way in such goodly company ; and passing the Hôtel de Ville and the bridges leading to Île St. Louis without noticing them, he found himself carried I know not whither, in the dust and the wind of that wild march.

II

For at least twenty-five years, it had been the custom of the Bonnicars to eat little pies on Sunday. At precisely twelve o'clock, when the whole family, great and small, was assembled in the salon, a sharp and merry ring at the bell would cause them all to say :

“ Ah ! there's the pastry-cook.”

Thereupon, with a great moving of chairs, the rustle of Sunday clothes, the expansive joy of laughing children about the well-laden table, all those happy bourgeois would take their places around the little pies, symmetrically heaped upon the silver chafing-dish.

That day the bell remained dumb. Monsieur Bonnicar, scandalised, looked at his clock, an old clock surmounted by a stuffed heron, which had never in its life gained or lost. The children yawned at the windows, watching the corner of the street where the apprentice usually appeared. Conversation languished, and hunger, which noon with its twelve strokes digs in the stomach, made the dining-room look very large and very dismal, despite the antique silver plate glistening on the damask cloth ; and the napkins all about, folded in the shape of little stiff white horns.

Several times already the old cook had come to whisper in her

master's ear : the joint burned, the peas cooked too much. But Monsieur Bonnicar was obstinately determined not to take his place at the table without the little pies ; and, furiously angry with Sureau, he resolved to go himself to see what such an unheard-of delay could mean. As he went out, brandishing his cane, hot with indignation, some neighbours warned him :

" Take care, Monsieur Bonnicar ; they say that the Versailles have entered Paris."

He refused to listen to anything, even to the cannonading which came from Neuilly, even to the alarm guns from the Hôtel de Ville, which shook all the windows in the quarter.

" Oh ! that Sureau ! that Sureau ! "

And in his excitement he talked to himself, fancied himself already in the middle of the shop, striking the floor with his cane, making the mirrors in the show-window and the plates of sweetmeats tremble. The barricade on Pont Louis Philippe cut his wrath in two. There were some confederates there, of ferocious mien, strutting about in the sun on the unpaved ground.

" Where are you going, citizen ? "

The citizen explained, but the story of the little pies seemed suspicious, especially as Monsieur Bonnicar had on his fine Sunday coat, his gold spectacles, and wore every appearance of an old reactionary.

" He's a spy," said the confederates ; " we must send him to Rigault."

Whereupon four enthusiasts, who were not sorry to leave the barricade, pushed the unfortunate, exasperated man before them with the butts of their guns.

I know not how they accomplished it, but half an hour later they were all captured by troops of the line, and were sent off to join a long column of prisoners about to start for Versailles. Monsieur Bonnicar protested more and more loudly, brandished his cane, told his story for the hundredth time. Unfortunately the fable about the little pies seemed so absurd, so incredible in the midst of that intense excitement, that the officers simply laughed.

" That's all right, that's all right, old fellow. You can explain at Versailles."

And through the Champs-Élysées, still white with the smoke of the firing, the column moved off between two rows of chasseurs.

III

The prisoners marched five by five, in close, compact ranks. To prevent the escort from being separated, they were obliged to walk arm in arm ; and the long human flock, tramping along through the dust of the road, made a noise like a heavy shower.

The unfortunate Bonnicar thought that he was dreaming. Perspiring, puffing, beside himself with alarm and fatigue, he trailed along at the end of the column, between two old hags who smelt of petroleum and brandy ; and from the words, " Pastry-cook, little pies," which constantly occurred in his imprecations, everybody about him thought that he had gone mad. In truth, the poor man's head was in a whirl. When they went up or down hill, and the ranks of the escort separated a little, he actually imagined that he saw, in the dust which filled the gaps, the white jacket and cap of the little apprentice at Sureau's ! And that happened ten times on the road. That little white flash passed before his eyes as if to mock at him ; then disappeared amid the swell of uniforms, blouses, and rags.

At last, at nightfall, they arrived at Versailles ; and when the crowd saw that old fellow with spectacles, dilapidated, dust-covered, and haggard, everybody agreed that he had the face of a villain. They said :

" It's Felix Pyat—no, it is Delescleuze."

The chasseurs of the escort had much difficulty in landing him safe and sound in the court of the Orangery. Not until then could the poor flock scatter, stretch itself out on the ground, and draw breath. There were some who slept, others who swore, others who coughed, others who wept ; but Bonnicar neither slept nor wept. Seated on a step, with his head in his hands, three-fourths dead with hunger, shame, and fatigue, he reviewed in his mind that unlucky day, his departure from his house, his anxious guests, that meal delayed until evening and still awaiting him ; and the humiliation, the insults, and the blows with the butts of muskets, all because of an unpunctual pastry-cook.

" Monsieur Bonnicar, here's your little pies ! " suddenly said a voice close beside him ; and the good man, raising his head, was greatly surprised to see the little apprentice from Sureau's, who had been arrested with the wards of the Republic, remove his cap, and hand him the dish which was concealed under his white apron. Thus it was that, despite the riot and his imprisonment, Monsieur Bonnicar had his little pies on that Sunday as on others.

THE SIEGE OF BERLIN

ALPHONSE DAUDET

WE were going up the Champs Élysées with Doctor V——, gathering from the walls pierced by shell, the pavement ploughed by grape-shot, the history of the besieged Paris, when just before reaching the Place de l'Étoile the doctor stopped and pointed out to me one of those large corner houses so pompously grouped around the Arc de Triomphe.

“Do you see,” said he, “those four closed windows on the balcony up there? In the beginning of August, that terrible month of August of '70, so laden with storm and disaster, I was summoned there to attend a case of apoplexy. The sufferer was Colonel Jouve, an old Cuirassier of the First Empire, full of enthusiasm for glory and patriotism, who, at the commencement of the war, had taken an apartment with a balcony in the Champs Élysées—for what do you think? To assist at the triumphal entry of our troops! Poor old man! The news of Wissembourg arrived as he was rising from table. On reading the name of Napoleon at the foot of that bulletin of defeat he fell senseless.

“I found the old Cuirassier stretched upon the floor, his face bleeding and inert as from the blow of a club. Standing, he would have been very tall; lying, he looked immense; with fine features, beautiful teeth, and white curling hair, carrying his eighty years as though they had been sixty. Beside him knelt his grand-daughter in tears. She resembled him. Seeing them side by side, they reminded me of two Greek medallions stamped with the same impress, only the one was antique, earth-stained, its outlines somewhat worn; the other beautiful and clear, in all the lustre of freshness.

“The child's sorrow touched me. Daughter and grand-daughter of soldiers—for her father was on MacMahon's staff—the sight of this old man stretched before her evoked in her mind another vision no less terrible. I did my best to reassure her, though in reality I had but little hope. We had to contend with hæmoptysis, from which at eighty there is small chance of recovery.

" For three days the patient remained in the same condition of immobility and stupor. Meanwhile came the news of Reichshofen—you remember how strangely? Till the evening we all believed in a great victory—20,000 Prussians killed, the Crown Prince prisoner.

" I cannot tell by what miracle, by what magnetic current, an echo of this national joy can have reached our poor invalid, hitherto deaf to all around him; but that evening on approaching the bed I found a new man. His eye was almost clear, his speech less difficult, and he had the strength to smile and to stammer:

" ' Victory, victory.'

" ' Yes, Colonel, a great victory.' And as I gave the details of MacMahon's splendid success I saw his features relax and his countenance brighten.

" When I went out his grand-daughter was waiting for me, pale and sobbing.

" ' But he is saved,' said I, taking her hands.

" The poor child had hardly courage to answer me. The true Reichshofen had just been announced, MacMahon a fugitive, the whole army crushed. We looked at each other in consternation, she anxious at the thought of her father, I trembling for the grandfather. Certainly he would not bear this new shock. And yet what could we do? Let him enjoy the illusion which had revived him? But then we should have to deceive him.

" ' Well, then, I will deceive him,' said the brave girl, and hastily wiping away her tears she re-entered her grandfather's room with a beaming face.

" It was a hard task she had set herself. For the first few days it was comparatively easy, as the old man's head was weak, and he was as credulous as a child. But with returning health came clearer ideas. It was necessary to keep him *au courant* with the movements of the army and to invent military bulletins. It was pitiful to see that beautiful girl bending night and day over her map of Germany, marking it with little flags, forcing herself to combine the whole of a glorious campaign—Bazaine on the road to Berlin, Frossard in Bavaria, MacMahon on the Baltic. In all this she asked my counsel, and I helped her as far as I could, but it was the grandfather who did the most for us in this imaginary invasion. He had conquered Germany so often during the First Empire. He knew all the moves beforehand. ' Now

they should go there. This is what they will do,' and his anticipations were always realised, not a little to his pride. Unfortunately, we might take towns and gain battles, but we never went fast enough for the Colonel. He was insatiable. Every day I was greeted with a fresh feat of arms.

" ' Doctor, we have taken Mayence,' said the young girl, coming to meet me with a heartrending smile, and through the door I heard a joyous voice crying :

" ' We are getting on, we are getting on. In a week we shall enter Berlin.'

" At that moment the Prussians were but a week from Paris. At first we thought it might be better to move to the provinces, but once out of doors, the state of the country would have told him all, and I thought him still too weak, too enervated, to know the truth. It was therefore decided that they should stay where they were.

" On the first day of the investment I went to see my patient—much agitated, I remember, and with that pang in my heart which we all felt at knowing that the gates of Paris were shut, that the war was under our walls, that our suburbs had become our frontiers.

" I found the old man jubilant and proud.

" ' Well,' said he, ' the siege has begun.'

" I looked at him stupefied.

" ' How, Colonel, do you know ? '

" His grand-daughter turned to me, ' Oh, yes, Doctor, it is great news. The siege of Berlin has commenced.'

" She said this composedly, while drawing out her needle. How could he suspect anything ? He could not hear the cannon nor see that unhappy Paris, so sullen and disorderly. All that he saw from his bed was calculated to keep up his delusion. Outside was the Arc de Triomphe, and in the room quite a collection of souvenirs of the First Empire. Portraits of marshals, engravings of battles, the King of Rome in his baby-robes ; the stiff consoles, ornamented with trophies in brass, were covered with Imperial relics, medals, bronzes ; a stone from St. Helena under a glass shade ; miniatures all representing the same becurled lady, in ball-dress, in a yellow gown with leg-of-mutton sleeves and light eyes ; and all—the consoles, the King of Rome, the medals, the yellow ladies with short waists and sashes under their arms—in that style of awkward stiffness which was the grace of 1806.—Good Colonel ! it was this atmosphere of victory and

conquest, rather than all we could say, which made him believe so naïvely in the siege of Berlin.

“ From that day our military operations became much simpler. Taking Berlin was merely a matter of patience. Every now and then, when the old man was tired of waiting, a letter from his son was read to him—an imaginary letter of course, as nothing could enter Paris, and as, since Sedan, MacMahon’s aide-de-camp had been sent to a German fortress. Can you not imagine the despair of the poor girl, without tidings of her father, knowing him to be a prisoner, deprived of all comforts, perhaps ill, and yet obliged to make him speak in cheerful letters, somewhat short, as from a soldier in the field, always advancing in a conquered country. Sometimes, when the invalid was weaker than usual, weeks passed without fresh news. But was he anxious and unable to sleep, suddenly a letter arrived from Germany which she read gaily at his bedside, struggling hard with her tears. The Colonel listened religiously, smiling with an air of superiority, approving, criticising, explaining; but it was in the answers to his son that he was at his best. ‘ Never forget that you are a Frenchman,’ he wrote; ‘ be generous to those poor people. Do not make the invasion too hard for them.’ His advice was never-ending; edifying sermons about respect of property, the politeness due to ladies—in short, quite a code of military honour for the use of conquerors. With all this he put in some general reflections on politics and the conditions of the peace to be imposed on the vanquished. With regard to the latter, I must say he was not exacting :

“ ‘ The war indemnity and nothing else. It is no good to take provinces. Can one turn Germany into France ? ’

“ He dictated this with so firm a voice, and one felt so much sincerity in his words, so much patriotic faith, that it was impossible to listen to him unmoved.

“ Meanwhile the siege went on—not the siege of Berlin, alas ! We were at the worst period of cold, of bombardment, of epidemic, of famine. But, thanks to our care, and the indefatigable tenderness which surrounded him, the old man’s serenity was never for a moment disturbed. Up to the end I was able to procure white bread and fresh meat for him, but for him only. You could not imagine anything more touching than those breakfasts of the grandfather, so innocently egotistic, sitting up in bed, fresh and smiling, the napkin tied under his chin, at his side his grand-daughter, pale from her privations, guiding

his hands, making him drink, helping him to eat all these good, forbidden things. Then, revived by the repast, in the comfort of his warm room, with the wintry wind shut out and the snow eddying about the window, the old Cuirassier would recall his Northern campaigns and would relate to us that disastrous retreat in Russia where there was nothing to eat but frozen biscuit and horse-flesh.

“ ‘ Can you understand that, little one ? We ate horseflesh.’ ”

“ I should think she did understand it. For two months she had tasted nothing else. As convalescence approached our task increased daily in difficulty. The numbness of the Colonel's senses, as well as of his limbs, which had hitherto helped us so much, was beginning to pass away. Once or twice already, those terrible volleys at the Porte Maillot had made him start and prick up his ears like a war-horse ; we were obliged to invent a recent victory of Bazaine's before Berlin and salvoes fired from the Invalides in honour of it. Another day (the Thursday of Buzenval I think it was) his bed had been pushed to the window, whence he saw some of the National Guard massed upon the Avenue de la Grande Armée.

“ ‘ What soldiers are those ? ’ he asked, and we heard him grumbling beneath his teeth :

“ ‘ Badly drilled, badly drilled.’ ”

“ Nothing came of this, but we understood that henceforth greater precautions were necessary. Unfortunately, we were not careful enough.

“ One evening I was met by the child in much trouble.

“ ‘ It is to-morrow they make their entry,’ she said.

“ Could the grandfather's door have been open ? In thinking of it since, I remember that all that evening his face wore an extraordinary expression. Probably he had overheard us ; only we spoke of the Prussians and he thought of the French, of the triumphal entry he had so long expected, MacMahon descending the Avenue amidst flowers and flourish of trumpets, his own son riding beside the marshal, and he himself on his balcony, in full uniform as at Lützen, saluting the ragged colours and the eagles blackened by powder.

“ Poor Colonel Jouve ! He no doubt imagined that we wished to prevent his assisting at the defile of our troops, lest the emotion should prove too much for him, and therefore took care to say nothing to us ; but the next day, just at the time the Prussian battalions cautiously entered the long road leading from the Porte Maillot to the Tuileries,

the window up there was softly opened and the Colonel appeared on the balcony with his helmet, his sword, all his long unused but glorious apparel of Milhaud's Cuirassiers.

"I often ask myself what supreme effort of will, what sudden impulse of fading vitality, had placed him thus erect in harness.

"All we know is that he was there, standing at the railing, wondering to find the wide avenue so silent, the shutters all closed, Paris like a great lazaret, flags everywhere, but such strange ones, white with red crosses, and no one to meet our soldiers.

"For a moment he may have thought himself mistaken.

"But no! there, behind the Arc de Triomphe, there was a confused sound, a black line advancing in the growing daylight—then, little by little, the spikes of the helmets glisten, the little drums of Jena begin to beat, and under the Arc de l'Étoile, accompanied by the heavy tramp of the troops, by the clatter of sabres, bursts forth Schubert's Triumphal March.

"In the dead silence of the streets was heard a cry, a terrible cry:

"'To arms!—to arms!—the Prussians.' And the four Uhlans of the advance guard might have seen up there on the balcony a tall old man stagger, wave his arms, and fall. This time Colonel Jouve was dead."

THE BOY SPY

ALPHONSE DAUDET

HIS name was Stenne : they called him Little Stenne.

He was a thorough child of Paris ; delicate-looking, pale, about ten years old—perhaps fifteen—one never can tell the ages of these scaramouches. His mother was dead ; his father, an old marine, used to guard a square in the Temple quarter. Babies, nursemaids, the old women with folding-chairs, poor mothers—all the leisurely-moving world of Paris which puts itself out of the way of carriages in those gardens—knew Father Stenne, and worshipped him. People knew that under that bristling moustache, the terror of dogs and tramps, there lurked a tender, pleasant, almost a maternal smile ; and that to see it one had only to say to the good man :—

“ How is your little boy ? ”

Father Stenne was very fond of his son. He was never so happy as in the evening after school when the little fellow came to fetch him, and when they went together round the walks, halting at every bench to speak to the regular loungers, and to reply to their civil greetings.

With the siege all this unfortunately changed. The square was closed ; petroleum had been stored in it, and poor Stenne, obliged to keep watch incessantly, passed his life amid the deserted, and partly destroyed, clumps of trees without being able to smoke, and without the company of his son until he returned home late in the evening. You should have seen his moustache when he spoke of the Prussians !

Little Stenne, however, did not complain very much of this new life. A siege is such fun for the street boys ! No more school ; no lessons ; holidays all the time, and the streets just like a fair ! The lad stayed out all day till quite evening, running about. He would accompany the battalions of the quarter on their turn of duty to the ramparts, choosing those specially which had good bands ; and on this question little Stenne was quite critical. He would have told you plainly that the band of the Ninety-sixth was not good for much ; but that the Fifty-fifth had an excellent one. At other times he

watched the mobiles drilling, and then there were the *queues* to occupy him.

With his basket on his arm he would take his place in the long lines which, in the half-light of the winter mornings—those gasless mornings—were formed outside the gates of the butchers and bakers. There the people, waiting for rations, their feet in the puddles, talked politics and made acquaintances ; and, as the son of M. Stenne, every one asked the lad his opinion. But the greatest fun of all was the cork-throwing parties—the famous game of *galoche*—which the Breton mobiles had introduced during the siege. When little Stenne was not on the ramparts, or at the distribution of rations, you would surely find him in the Place Château d'Eau. He did not play *galoche* himself, you must understand : too much money was needed for that. He contented himself by watching the players “ with all his eyes.”

One lad—a big fellow in a blue jacket—who never ventured aught but five-franc pieces, especially excited the admiration of little Stenne. When this fellow moved about you could hear the coins jingling in his pocket.

One day, when picking up a piece that had rolled to the feet of our hero, the big boy said to him :

“ Ah ! that makes your mouth water, eh ? Well, if you wish, I will tell you where to find some like this.”

When the game was finished he led Stenne to a corner of the Place, and proposed that he should go with him and sell newspapers to the Germans—at thirty francs the trip ! At first Stenne indignantly refused, and he did not go again to watch the game for three whole days—three terrible days. He no longer ate nor slept. At night he had visions of heaps of *galoches* at the foot of his bed, and five-franc pieces rolling and shining brightly. The temptation was too strong. On the fourth day he returned to the Château d'Eau, saw the big boy again, and permitted himself to be led astray !

One snowy morning they set out carrying a linen bag, and with a number of newspapers stuffed under their blouses. When they reached the Flanders Gate it was scarcely daylight. The big boy took Stenne by the hand, and approaching the sentry—a brave “ stay-at-home,” who had a red nose, and a good-natured expression—said to him, in a whining tone :

“ Let us pass, good sir ; our mother is ill, papa is dead. We are

going—my little brother and I—to pick up some potatoes in the fields.”

He began to cry. Stenne, shame-faced, hung down his head. The sentry looked at the lads for a moment, and then glanced down the white, deserted road.

“Get on with you, quick !” he said, turning away ; and then they were in the Aubervilliers road. The big boy laughed heartily !

Confusedly, as in a dream, little Stenne saw the factories, now converted into barracks ; abandoned barricades decked out with wet rags, and high chimneys, now smokeless, standing up, half in ruins, against the misty sky. At certain distances were sentries ; officers, cloaked and hooded, sweeping the horizon with their field-glasses ; and small tents saturated by the melting snow beside the expiring watch-fires. The big boy knew the paths, and took his way across the fields so as to avoid the outposts.

Presently, however, they came upon a strong guard of Franc-tireurs, and were unable to pass by unnoticed. The men were in a number of small huts concealed in a ditch full of water all along the line of the Soissons railway. Here it was no avail for the big boy to tell his story ; the Franc-tireurs would not let him pass. But while he was lamenting, an old sergeant, with white hair and wrinkled face, came out from the guard-house ; he was something like Father Stenne.

“Come, come, you brats, don’t cry any more !” he said. “You may go and fetch your potatoes ; but first come in and warm yourselves a little. The youngster there looks nearly frozen !”

Alas ! little Stenne was not trembling from cold, but for fear, for very shame !

In the guardhouse were some soldiers huddled round a very poor fire—a true “widow’s fire,” at which they were toasting biscuits on the points of their bayonets. The men sat up close to make room for the boys, and gave them a drop of coffee. While they were drinking it an officer came to the door and summoned the sergeant of the guard. He spoke to him very rapidly in a low tone and went off in a hurry.

“My lads,” said the sergeant, as he turned round with a beaming countenance, “*There will be tobacco* to-night ! The watchword of the Prussians has been discovered, and this time we shall take that cursed Bourget from them !”

There was an explosion of “bravos” and laughter. The men

danced, sang, and clashed their sword-bayonets, while the lads, taking advantage of the tumult, wended on their way.

The trench crossed, the plain lay extended in front of them; beyond it was a long white wall, loopholed for musketry. Towards this wall they made their way, halting at every step, pretending to pick up potatoes.

"Let us go back; do not go there," little Stenne kept saying. But the other only shrugged his shoulders, and continued to advance. Suddenly they heard the click of a fire-lock.

"Lie down," cried the big boy, throwing himself flat on the ground as he spoke.

As soon as he was down he whistled. Another whistle came across the snow in reply. The boys crawled on. In front of the wall, on the level of the plain, appeared a pair of yellow moustaches under a dirty forage-cap. The big boy leaped into the trench beside the Prussian.

"This is my brother," he said, indicating his companion.

He was so small, this little Stenne, that the Prussian laughed when he looked at him, and he was obliged to lift him up to the embrasure.

On the farther side of the wall were great mounds of earth, felled trees, dark holes in the snow, and in every hole was a dirty cap and a yellow moustache, whose wearer grinned as the lads passed.

In one corner stood a gardener's cottage, casemated with trunks of trees. The lower storey was filled with soldiers playing cards, or busy making soup over a clear fire. How good the cabbage and bacon smelt! What a difference from the bivouac of the Franc-tireurs! Upstairs the officers were quartered. Some one was playing a piano, while from time to time the popping of champagne corks was also audible.

When the Parisians entered a cheer of welcome assailed them. They distributed their newspapers, had something to drink, and the officers "drew them out." These officers wore a haughty and disdainful air, but the big boy amused them with his street slang and vulgar smartness. Little Stenne would rather have spoken, to have proved that he was not a fool, but something restrained him. Opposite to him was seated a Prussian older and more serious than the rest, who was reading, or rather pretending to read, for his gaze was fixed on little Stenne. In his steadfast look were tenderness and reproach,

as if he had at home a child of the same age as Stenne—as if he was saying to himself :

“ I would rather die than see my own son engaged in such a business ! ”

From that moment Stenne felt as if a heavy hand had been laid upon his heart, and that its beatings were checked—stifled.

To escape from this terrible feeling he began to drink. Soon the room and its occupants were turning round him. In a vague way he heard his companion, amidst loud laughter, making game of the National Guard—of their style of drill ; imitating a rush to arms ; a night alarm on the ramparts. Subsequently the “ big fellow ” lowered his tone, the officers drew nearer, their faces became more grave. The wretch was about to tell them of the intended attack of the Franc-tireurs.

Then little Stenne stood up in a rage, as his senses returned to him ; he cried out, “ None of that, big one, none of that ! ” but the other only laughed and continued. Ere he had finished, all the officers were on their feet. One of them opened the door.

“ Get out,” he said to the boys. “ Be off ! ”

Then they began to converse among themselves in German. The big boy walked out as proud as the Doge, clinking his money in his pocket. Stenne followed him with drooping head, and as he passed the elderly Prussian, whose glance had so discomposed him, he heard him say in a sad tone in broken French, “ This is bad ! Very bad ! ”

Tears came into Stenne’s eyes. Once in the plain again, the lads set out running, and returned quickly. The bag was full of potatoes which the Prussians had given them, and with it they passed the Franc-tireurs unmolested. The troops were preparing for the attack that night ; bodies of men were coming up silently and massing themselves behind the walls. The old sergeant was present, engaged in posting his men, and seemed quite happy. As the lads passed he nodded at them, and smiled kindly in recognition.

Ah ! how bad Stenne felt when he saw that smile : he felt inclined to cry out :

“ Don’t advance yonder ; we have betrayed you ! ”

But the “ big one ” had told him that if he said anything they would both be shot ; and fear restrained him.

At La Courneuve the pair went into an empty house to divide the

money. Truth compels me to state that the division was honourably made, and little Stenne did not feel his crime weigh so heavily on his mind when he heard the coins jingling in his pocket, and thought of the prospective games of *galoché* !

But—unhappy child !—when he was left alone ! When, after they had passed the gate, and his companion had left him—oh, then his pocket weighed heavily, and the hand which pressed upon his heart was hard indeed ! Paris was no longer the same. The people passing looked at him severely, as if they were aware of his mission. The word *spy* seemed to ring in his ears, and he heard it above the din of carriages, and in the rolling of the drums along the canal.

At length he reached home, and was very glad to find that his father had not yet come in. He hurried upstairs to his room to hide the crowns which had become so burdensome to him.

Never had Father Stenne been in such spirits, never in such good humour, as on that evening when he returned home. News had come in from the provinces: things were going better. As he ate his supper the old soldier gazed at his musket which was hanging on the wall, and exclaimed: "Hey, my lad, how you would go at the Prussians if you were big enough !"

About eight o'clock the sound of cannon was heard.

"That's Aubervilliers; they are fighting at Bourget," said the good old man, who knew all the forts. Little Stenne turned pale, and feigning fatigue went to bed, but not to sleep. The thunder of the cannon continued. He pictured to himself the Franc-tireurs marching in the darkness to surprise the Prussians, and falling into an ambushade themselves. He recalled the sergeant who had smiled, and pictured him, with many others, extended lifeless on the snow. The price of all this blood was then under his pillow, and he—he, the son of M. Stenne, a soldier—what had he done? Tears choked him. He could hear his father walking about in the next room; he heard him open the window. In the Place below the *rappel* was being beaten; a battalion of mobiles was mustering. Yes, it was a real battle—no mistake about it ! The unhappy lad could not repress his sobs.

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Father Stenne, coming into the bedroom.

The lad could bear it no longer; he jumped out of bed, and was about to throw himself at his father's feet when the silver coins rolled out upon the floor.

"What's this? Have you robbed any one?" asked the old soldier in a tremulous voice.

Then, all in a breath, little Stenne told him how he had gone to the Prussian lines and what he had done. As he continued to speak the weight on his heart grew less—it was a relief to accuse himself. Father Stenne listened; his face was terrible to see. When the lad had finished his narrative the old man buried his face in his hands and wept aloud.

"Oh, father! father!——"

The boy would have spoken, but the old man pushed him aside, and picked up the money without a word.

"Is this all?" he asked.

Little Stenne made a sign in the affirmative. The old soldier took down his musket and cartouche-box, and putting the silver money in his pocket, said calmly:

"Very well; I am going to pay it back to them!"

Then, without another word, without even turning his head, he descended the stairs, and joined the mobiles who were marching out into the darkness.

No one ever saw him again!

BELISAIRE'S PRUSSIAN

ALPHONSE DAUDET

HERE is a story which I heard this very week in a drinking-shop at Montmartre. To do the tale justice I ought to possess the faubourg accents of Master Belisaire, and his great carpenter's apron ; and to drink two or three cups of that splendid white wine of Montmartre, which is capable of imparting a Parisian accent to even a native of Marseilles. Then I might be able to make your flesh creep, and your blood run cold, as Belisaire did when he related this lugubrious and veracious story to his boon companions.

" It was the day after the ' amnesty ' (Belisaire meant armistice). My wife wished me to take our child across to Villeneuve-la-Garenne to look after a little cottage we had there, and of which we had heard and seen nothing since the siege had commenced. I felt nervous about taking the little chap with me, for I knew that we should fall in with the Prussians ; and as I had not yet encountered them, I was afraid that something unpleasant would happen. But his mother was determined. ' Get out ! ' she cried. ' Let the lad have a breath of fresh air ! '

" And the fact is he wanted it badly, poor little chap, after five months of the siege operations and privations.

" So we started off together across the fields. I suppose he was happy, poor mite, in seeing the trees and the birds again, and in dabbling himself with mud in the ploughed land ; but I was not so comfortable myself ; there were too many spiked helmets about for me. All the way from the canal to the island we met them every moment ; and how insolent they were ! It was as much as I could do to restrain myself from knocking some of them down. But I did feel my temper getting the better of me as we reached Villeneuve, and saw our poor gardens all in disorder, plants rooted up, the houses open and pillaged, and those bandits established in them ! They were shouting to each other from the windows, and drying their clothes on our trellises. Fortunately the lad was trotting along close beside me, and I thought when I looked at him, if my hands itched more

than usual, 'Keep cool, Belisaire ; take care that no harm befall the brat !'

"Nothing but this feeling prevented me from committing some foolish act. Then I understood why his mother had been so determined about my bringing the boy out.

"The hut is at the end of the open space, the last on the right hand on the quay. I found it empty from top to bottom, like all the others. Not an article of furniture, not a pane of glass, was left in it ! There was nothing except some bundles of straw and the last leg of the big arm-chair, which was smouldering in the chimney. These signs were Prussian all over ; but I could see nothing of the Germans.

"Nevertheless it seemed to me that somebody was stirring in the basement. I had a bench down there at which I used to amuse myself on Sundays. So I told the child to wait for me, and went down.

"No sooner had I opened the door than a great hulking soldier of William's army rose growling from the shavings and came at me, his eyes starting from his head, swearing strange oaths which I did not understand. I could perceive that the brute meant mischief, for at the first word that I attempted to speak he began to draw his sword.

"My blood boiled in a second. All the bile which had been aroused during the previous hour or so rushed to my face. I seized the bench-iron and struck him with it. You know, my lads, whether my fist is usually a light one, but it seemed to me that that day I had a thunder-bolt at the end of my arm. At the first blow the Prussian measured his length upon the floor. I thought he was only stunned. Ah ! well, yes ! But all I had to do was to clear out, to get myself out of the pickle.

"It seemed queer to me, who had never killed anything—not even a lark—in my life, to see the great body lying there. My faith ! but he was a fine fair-haired fellow, with a curly beard like deal shavings. My legs trembled as I looked—and now the brat upstairs was beginning to feel lonely, and to yell out, 'Papa, papa !' at the top of his voice.

"There were some Prussians passing along the road. I could see their sabres and their long legs through the casement of the underground room. Suddenly the idea struck me—'If they enter the child is lost.' That was enough. I trembled no longer. In a second I dragged the corpse under the bench, covered it with planks and shavings, and hurried up the stairs to join the child.

" ' Here I am ! ' I said.

" ' What is the matter, papa ? How pale you are ! ' "

" ' Come, let us get on ! ' "

" I declare to you that the ' Cossacks ' might hustle me, or regard me with suspicion, but I would not take any notice of them. It seemed that some one was running after me, and crying out behind us all the time. Once when a horseman came galloping up, I thought I would have fallen down in a faint ! However, after I had passed the bridges I began to pull myself together. Saint Denis was full of people. There was no risk of our being fished out of the crowd. Then I only thought of our little cottage. The Prussians would surely burn it when they found their comrade, to say nothing of the risk of Jaquot, my neighbour, the water-bailiff, who, being the only Frenchman left in the hamlet, would be held responsible for the dead soldier ! Truly it was scarcely plucky to save myself in such a way !

" I felt that I must arrange for the concealment of the body somehow ! The nearer we came to Paris the closer I cherished this idea. I could not leave that Prussian in my basement. So at the ramparts I hesitated no longer.

" ' You go on,' I said to the brat, ' I have another place to visit in Saint Denis.'

" I embraced him, and turned back. My heart was beating rather fast, but all the same I felt easier in my mind, not having the child with me then.

" When I again reached Villeneuve, night was approaching. I kept my eyes open, you may depend, and advanced foot by foot. The place seemed quiet enough, however. I could discern the hut still standing yonder in the mist. There was a long black line, or row, upon the quay. This ' palisade ' was composed of Prussians calling the roll. A splendid opportunity to find the house deserted. As I made my way along I noticed Father Jaquot engaged in drying his nets. Decidedly nothing was known yet. I entered my house, I went down into the basement and felt about among the shavings. The Prussian was there ! There were also a couple of rats already busy at work at his helmet, and, for a moment, I had a horrible fright, when I felt his chin-strap move ! Was he reviving ? No ; his head was heavy and cold.

" I crouched in a corner and waited. I had the idea to throw the body into the Seine when the others were all asleep.

" I do not know whether it was the proximity of the dead, but I was uncommonly sorry when the Prussians sounded the 'retreat.'

" For some five minutes I heard the clanking of sabres, the tapping at doors ; and then the soldiers entered the courtyard and began to shout :

" ' Hofmann ! Hofmann ! ' "

" Poor Hofmann remained quiet under his shavings ; but 'twas I who was on the alert. Every instant I expected to see the guard enter. I had picked up the dead man's sabre, and there I was ready, but saying to myself, ' If you get out of this scrape, my boy, you will owe a splendid wax taper to Saint John the Baptist of Belleville ! ' "

" However, after they had called several times my tenants decided to return. I could hear their heavy boots upon the staircase, and in a few moments the whole house was snoring like a country clock. This was all I had been waiting for. I looked out.

" The place was deserted ; all the houses were in darkness. Good for me ! I re-descended quickly, drew my Hofmann from beneath the bench, stood him upright, raised him on my back, like a burden, or a bale. But wasn't he heavy, the brigand ! What with his weight, my terror, and the want of food, I was afraid that I should not have strength to reach my destination. Then no sooner had I reached the centre of the quay than I heard some one walking behind me. I turned round. There was no one ! The moon was rising. I said to myself, ' I must look out ; the sentries will fire ! ' "

" To add to my trouble the Seine was low. If I had cast the corpse on the bank it would have remained there as in a cistern. I went on ; no water ! I could not go out any farther : my breath came thick and short. I panted. At length when I thought I had gone far enough, I threw down my load. There he goes into the mud ! I pushed and pushed ! *Hue !* There ! "

" Fortunately a puff of wind came up from the east, the river rose a little, and I felt the ' Maccabee ' leave his moorings gently. Pleasant journey to him ! I took a draught of water, and quickly mounted the bank.

" As I passed the bridge at Villeneuve the people were gazing at something black in the water. At that distance it had the appearance of a wherry. It was my Prussian, who was coming down on the current, in the middle of the stream ! "

MOTHERS

ALPHONSE DAUDET

THAT morning I had gone to Mount Valérien to see our friend B——, the painter, a lieutenant in the battalion of the Seine. The excellent fellow happened to be on guard at the time. He could not leave his post. So we had to remain there, pacing back and forth like sailors on watch, in front of the postern of the fort, talking of Paris, of the war, and of our absent dear ones. Suddenly my lieutenant, who, beneath his soldier's tunic, had always remained the enthusiastic art student of the old days, interrupted me, struck an attitude, and seizing my arm, said to me in an undertone :

“ Oh ! what a fine Daumier ! ”

And while the corner of his little grey eye suddenly lighted up like the eye of a hunting-dog, he pointed to two venerable silhouettes which had just made their appearance on the plateau of Mount Valérien.

A magnificent Daumier, in very truth. The man, in a long, chestnut-coloured coat, with a collar of greenish velvet that seemed to be made of old wood-moss ; short and thin, with a red face, low forehead, round eyes, and a nose like an owl's beak. A wrinkled bird's face, solemn and stupid. To complete the picture, a bag of flowered carpet, from which protruded the neck of a bottle, and under the other arm a box of preserves, the everlasting tin box which no Parisian will ever be able to look upon again without thinking of the five months of siege. Of the woman we saw at first only an enormous cab-like hat, and an old shawl wrapped tightly about her from neck to heels, as if sharply to outline her poverty ; then, from time to time, between the faded ruffles of the hood, the sharp end of a nose peered out and a few poor, grizzled locks.

On reaching the plateau the man stopped to take breath and to wipe his forehead. It was not very hot up there in the late November fog, however ; but they had come so fast.

The woman did not stop. Walking straight to the postern, she gazed at us a moment hesitatingly, as if she wished to speak to us ; but, held in awe doubtless by the officer's straps, she preferred to

apply to the sentinel, and I heard her timidly asking permission to see her son, a Parisian infantryman of the 6th Regiment of the Third.

"Stay here," said the sentry, "and I will send for him."

Overjoyed, she ran to her husband with a sigh of relief, and they sat down together on the edge of a slope.

They waited for a long while. Mount Valérien is so large, such a labyrinth of courtyards, of glacis, of bastions, of barracks and casemates ! It is a hard task to find a soldier of the 6th in that entangled city, suspended between heaven and earth, and hovering in a spiral column amid the clouds, like the island of Laputa—to say nothing of the fact that at that hour the fort was full of drums and trumpets, and soldiers running, and canteens jingling. The guard was being changed, the tasks allotted, and rations distributed ; a spy covered with blood, driven in by sharp-shooters with the butts of their guns ; peasants from Nanterre coming to complain to the general ; an orderly arriving at a gallop, the man worn out, the horse steaming ; and litters returning from the outposts, with the wounded swaying from side to side on the mules' backs and groaning softly like sick lambs ; sailors hauling a new gun to the sound of fifes and cries of "Heave ho !" the flock of sheep belonging to the fort driven in by a shepherd in red trousers, with a switch in his hand and his helmet slung over his shoulder ; all these going and coming, passing one another in the courtyards, disappearing under the postern, as through the low doorway of an Eastern caravansary.

"If only they don't forget my boy !" said the poor mother's eyes meanwhile ; and every five minutes she rose, walked softly towards the gate, cast a furtive glance into the outer courtyard, peering out from behind the wall ; but she dared not ask any more questions for fear of making her child ridiculous. The man, who was even more timid than she, did not move from his corner, and each time that she returned to her seat with a heavy heart and a discouraged look, we could see that he scolded her for her impatience, and that he gave her abundant explanations about the needs of the service, with the gestures of a fool trying to play the pundit.

I have always been much interested in these silent scenes of private life, which one divines rather than sees, these pantomimes of the street which elbow you when you walk abroad, and reveal a whole existence with a gesture ; but what captivated me especially in this episode was the ingenuousness and awkwardness of the characters,

and I was genuinely moved in following through their pantomime, as clear and expressive as the soul of two of Seraphin's actors, all the changes of an interesting family drama.

I imagined the mother saying to herself one fine morning :

" I'm tired of this General Trochu, with his orders. It's three months since I've seen my boy. I propose to go and embrace him."

The father, timid and awkward in the affairs of life, alarmed at the thought of the steps he would have to take to procure a permit, tried at first to argue with her :

" Why, you mustn't think of such a thing, my dear ! That Mount Valérien is as far away as the devil. How will you ever manage to get there, without a carriage ? Besides, it's a citadel ! Women can't go in ! "

" I will go in," said the mother ; and as she does whatever she wishes, the man started off ; he went to the *secteur*, to the mayor's office, to staff headquarters, to the commissary, perspiring with fear, freezing, running into everything, mistaking the door, waiting two hours in line at a department which proved to be the wrong one. At last, at night, he returned with a permit from the governor in his pocket. The next day they rose early in the cold, by lamplight. The father broke the crust to warm himself, but the mother was not hungry. She preferred to breakfast yonder with her son. And to treat the poor soldier a little, they hurriedly piled in the basket the ban and arrière-ban of the siege provisions—chocolate, preserves, sealed wine, everything, even to the box, a box that cost eight francs, which they had treasured carefully for days of great want. And then they started. As they reached the ramparts, the gates were just opened. They had to show the permit. Then it was the mother who was frightened. But no, it seems that it was all right.

" Let them pass ! " said the adjutant on duty.

Not until then did she breathe freely.

" That officer was very polite."

And away she trotted, as active as a partridge, in hot haste. The man could hardly keep up with her.

" How fast you go, my dear ! "

But she did not listen. Up yonder, in the vapour of the horizon, Mount Valérien beckoned to her :

" Come quick, he is here."

And now that they had arrived, there was a new period of agony. Suppose they did not find him ! Suppose he did not come !

Suddenly I saw her start, touch the old man's arm and spring to her feet. At a distance, under the arched postern, she had recognised his step.

It was he ! When he appeared, the front of the fort was all lighted up by him. A tall, fine-looking fellow, on my word ! Erect, with his knapsack on his back and his musket over his shoulder. He approached them, his face wreathed in smiles, and said in a manly, joyous voice :

" Good day, mother."

And instantly knapsack, coat, helmet, everything disappeared in the great cab-like hat. Then the father had his turn, but that was not long. The hat wanted everything for itself ; it was insatiable.

" How are you ? Are you warmly clothed ? How are you off for linen ? "

And I could feel, beneath the ruffles of the hood, the long, loving glance with which she enveloped him from head to foot, amid a rain of kisses, of tears, and of little laughs : the arrears of three months of motherly affection paid all at once. The father, too, was deeply moved, but he was determined not to show it. He realised that we were looking at him, and he winked in our direction, as if to say to us :

" Excuse her, she's a woman."

Excuse her !

A bugle-blast suddenly blew cold upon that exuberant joy.

" There goes the recall," said the boy. " I must go."

" What ! aren't you going to breakfast with us ? "

" Why, no ! I can't. I am on duty for twenty-four hours, at the top of the fort."

" Oh ! " exclaimed the poor woman ; and she could say no more.

They stood for a moment looking at one another, all three, with an air of consternation. Then the father spoke.

" At least take the box," he said in a heartrending voice, with an expression of martyred gluttony, at once touching and comical. But lo, in the confusion and excitement of the parting, they could not find the cursed box ; and it was pitiful to see those feverish, trembling hands seeking and groping ; to hear those voices, broken with tears, ask : " The box ? Where is the box ? " with no shame at intruding

that little housekeeping detail upon their great grief. When the box was found, there was a last long embrace and the son ran back into the fort.

Remember that they had come a long distance for that breakfast, that they had made a great occasion of it, that the mother had not slept the night before ; and tell me if you can imagine anything more heartrending than that abortive expedition, that corner of paradise barely glimpsed and suddenly closed so brutally.

They waited some time, without moving, on the same spot, with their eyes still fixed upon that postern through which their boy had disappeared. At last the man shook himself, turned half about, coughed two or three times with a very brave air, and said aloud and very jauntily, his voice steadied at last :

“ Come, mother, let’s be off ! ”

Thereupon he made us a low bow and took his wife’s arm. I followed them with my eyes to the bend in the road. The father acted like a madman. He brandished the basket with desperate gestures. The mother seemed calmer. She walked beside him with her head hanging, her arms close to her sides. But at times I fancied that I could see her shawl quiver convulsively on her narrow shoulders.

THE LAST LESSON

ALPHONSE DAUDET

I STARTED for school very late that morning and was in great dread of a scolding, especially because M. Hamel had said that he would question us on participles, and I did not know the first word about them. For a moment I thought of running away and spending the day out of doors. It was so warm, so bright ! The birds were chirping at the edge of the woods ; and in the open field back of the saw-mill the Prussian soldiers were drilling. It was all much more tempting than the rule for participles, but I had the strength to resist, and hurried off to school.

When I passed the town-hall there was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board. For the last two years all our bad news had come from there—the lost battles, the draft, the orders of the commanding officer—and I thought to myself, without stopping :

“ What can be the matter now ? ”

Then, as I hurried by as fast as I could go, the blacksmith, Wachter, who was there, with his apprentice, reading the bulletin, called after me :

“ Don’t go so fast, lad ; you’ll get to your school in plenty of time ! ”

I thought he was making fun of me, and reached M. Hamel’s little garden all out of breath.

Usually, when school began, there was a great bustle, which could be heard out in the street, the opening and closing of desks, lessons repeated in unison, very loud, with our hands over our ears to understand better, and the teacher’s great ruler rapping on the table. But now it was all so still ! I had counted on the commotion to get to my desk without being seen ; but, of course, that day everything had to be as quiet as Sunday morning. Through the window I saw my school-mates, already in their places, and M. Hamel walking up and down with his terrible iron ruler under his arm. I had to open the door and go in before everybody. You can imagine how I blushed and how frightened I was.

But nothing happened. M. Hamel saw me and said very kindly :

"Go to your place quickly, little Franz. We were beginning without you."

I jumped over the bench and sat down at my desk. Not till then, when I had got a little over my fright, did I see that our teacher had on his beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt, and the little black silk cap, all embroidered, that he never wore except on inspection and prize days. Besides, the whole school seemed so strange and solemn. But the thing that surprised me most was to see, on the back fences that were always empty, the village people sitting quietly like ourselves ; old Hauser, with his three-cornered hat, the former mayor, the former postmaster, and several others besides. Everybody looked sad ; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.

While I was wondering about it all, M. Hamel mounted his chair, and, in the same grave and gentle tone which he had used to me, he said :

"My children, this is the last lesson I shall give you. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new master comes to-morrow. This is your last French lesson. I want you to be very attentive."

What a thunder-clap these words were to me !

Oh, the wretches ; *that* was what they had put up at the town-hall !

My last French lesson ! Why, I hardly knew how to write ! I should never learn any more ! I must stop there, then ! Oh, how sorry I was for not learning my lessons, for robbing birds' eggs, or going sliding on the Soar ! My books, that had seemed such a nuisance a while ago, so heavy to carry, my grammar, and my history of the saints, were old friends now that I couldn't give up. And M. Hamel, too ; the idea that he was going away, that I should never see him again, made me forget all about his ruler and how cranky he was.

Poor man ! It was in honour of this last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday clothes, and now I understood why the old men of the village were sitting there in the back of the room. It was because they were sorry, too, that they had not gone to school more. It was their way of thanking our master for his forty years of faithful service and of showing their respect for the country that was theirs no more.

While I was thinking of all this, I heard my name called. It was my turn to recite. What would I not have given to be able to say

that dreadful rule for the participle all through, very loud and clear, and without one mistake ? But I got mixed up on the first words and stood there, holding on to my desk, my heart beating, and not daring to look up. I heard M. Hamel say to me :

“ I won’t scold you, little Franz ; you must feel bad enough. See how it is ! Every day we have said to ourselves : ‘ Bah ! I’ve plenty of time. I’ll learn it to-morrow.’ And now you see what we’ve come to ! Ah, that’s the great trouble with Alsace ; she puts off learning till to-morrow. Now those fellows out there will have the right to say to you : ‘ How is it ; you pretend to be Frenchmen, and yet you can neither speak nor write your own language ? ’ But you are not the worst, poor little Franz. We’ve all a great deal to reproach ourselves with.

“ Your parents were not anxious enough to have you learn. They preferred to put you to work on a farm or at the mills, so as to have a little more money. And I ? I’ve been to blame also. Have I not often sent you to water my flowers instead of learning your lessons ? And when I wanted to go fishing, did I not just give you a holiday ? ”

Then, from one thing to another, M. Hamel went on to talk of the French language, saying that it was the most beautiful language in the world—the clearest, the most logical ; that we must guard it among us and never forget it, because when a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison. Then he opened a grammar and read us our lesson. I was amazed to see how well I understood it. All he said seemed so easy, so easy ! I think, too, that I had never listened so carefully, and that he had never explained everything with so much patience. It seemed almost as if the poor man wanted to give us all he knew before going away, and to put it all into our heads at one stroke.

After the grammar, we had a lesson in writing. That day M. Hamel had new copies for us, written in a beautiful round hand : *France, Alsace, France, Alsace*. They looked like little flags everywhere in the schoolroom, hung from the rod at the top of our desks. You ought to have seen how every one set to work, and how quiet it was ! The only sound was the scratching of the pens over the paper. Once some chafers flew in ; but nobody paid any attention to them, not even the littlest ones, who worked straight on tracing their fish-hooks, as if that was French, too. On the roof the pigeons cooed very low, and I thought to myself :

“ Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons ? ”

Whenever I looked up from my writing I saw M. Hamel sitting motionless in his chair and gazing first at one thing, then at another, as if he wanted to fix in his mind just how everything looked in that little schoolroom. Fancy ! For forty years he had been there in the same place, with his garden outside the window and his class in front of him, just like that. Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth ; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hop-vine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof. How it must have broken his heart to leave it all, poor man ; to hear his sister moving about in the room above, packing their trunks ! For they must leave the country next day.

But he had the courage to hear every lesson to the very last. After the writing, we had a lesson in history, and then the babies chanted their *ba, be, bi, bo, bu*. Down there at the back of the room old Hauser had put on his spectacles and, holding his primer in both hands, spelled the letters with them. You could see that he, too, was trying ; his voice trembled with emotion, and it was so funny to hear him that we all wanted to laugh and cry. Ah, how well I remember it, that last lesson !

All at once the church-clock struck twelve. Then the Angelus. At the same moment the trumpets of the Prussians, returning from drill, sounded under our windows. M. Hamel stood up, very pale, in his chair. I never saw him look so tall.

“ My friends,” said he, “ I—I——” But something choked him. He could not go on.

Then he turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk, and, bearing on with all his might, he wrote as large as he could :

“ *Vive La France !* ”

Then he stopped and leaned his head against the wall, and, without a word, he made a gesture to us with his hand :

“ School is over—you may go.”

THE DEATH OF THE DAUPHIN

ALPHONSE DAUDET

THE little Dauphin is ill. The little Dauphin is going to die. In all the churches of the kingdom the Holy Sacrament remains exposed night and day, and tall candles burn for the recovery of the royal child. The streets of the old capital are sad and silent ; no bells sound ; carriages move slowly. At the approaches to the palace, the curious townspeople see, through the ironwork gates, the beadles with gilded paunches talking in the courtyard with an important air.

All the castle is in a flutter of anxiety. Chamberlains and major-domos mount and descend the marble stairs at a run. The galleries are full of pages and courtiers in silken garments, who go from one group to the other, seeking news in whispers. On the large staircase, weeping maids-of-honour make deep curtseys, wiping their eyes with pretty embroidered handkerchiefs.

In the Orangery there is a numerous assembly of long-robed doctors. They can be seen through the window-panes, agitating their wide black sleeves, and learnedly inclining their clapper wigs. The governor and the squire of the little Dauphin walk up and down before the door, awaiting the decisions of the Faculty. Scullions pass by them without saluting. The squire is swearing like a pagan ; the governor recites some verses of Horace. Meanwhile, down there by the side of the stables, a long plaintive neigh is heard. It is the chestnut of the little Dauphin, that the grooms have forgotten, and that sadly complains before his empty manger.

And the King ! Where is His Majesty the King ? The King has shut himself up alone in a room at the end of the castle. Royal persons do not like to be seen weeping ! But as for the Queen, that is another thing. Sitting by the pillow of the little Dauphin, her lovely face streaming with tears, she sobs aloud before everybody, as a tradesman's wife would do.

In his cot of lace the little Dauphin, whiter than the cushions on which he is stretched, rests with closed eyes. It is thought he is

sleeping ; but no ! The little Dauphin is not asleep. . . . He turns towards his mother, and seeing her tears, he says to her, " Madame the Queen, why do you weep ? Do you really think, like all the others, that I am going to die ? " The Queen tries to answer ; sobs prevent her from speaking.

" Do not cry, Madame the Queen ! You forget that I am the Dauphin, and that Dauphins cannot die in this way." The Queen sobs still more, and the little Dauphin begins to be frightened. " Stop ! " he says, " I do not want Death to come and take me, and I know quite well how I can hinder him from coming here. Order at once forty of our strongest halberdiers to mount guard round our bed ! Let a hundred big cannon and their gunners, with lighted matches, stand night and day under our windows ! And woe to Death if he dares to draw near us ! "

To humour the royal child the Queen gives the order. At once there is heard the big cannon rolling in the courtyard ; and forty tall halberdiers, halberds in hand, enter and range themselves round the room. They are all veterans, with grey moustaches. The little Dauphin claps his hands when he sees them. He recognises one of them, and calls to him : " Lorrain ! Lorrain ! " The soldier makes a step towards the bed. " I like you very much, my old Lorrain. Let me see your great sword. If Death wishes to take me, you will kill him, won't you ? " Lorrain answers, " Yes, sir. . . ." And two big tears run down his tanned cheeks.

At this moment a priest approaches the little Dauphin, and speaks to him for a long time in a low voice, showing him a crucifix. The little Dauphin listens with an air of great astonishment ; then all of a sudden interrupting him : " I understand quite well what you say to me, but after all, could not my little friend Beppo die in my place, if we gave him a great deal of money ? " The priest continues to speak to him in a low voice, and the astonishment of the little Dauphin increases.

When the priest has finished, the little Dauphin says with a big sigh, " All that you tell me is very sad, sir. But one thing consoles me—that is, above there, in the paradise of stars, I shall still be the Dauphin. . . . I know that God is my cousin, and will not fail to treat me according to my rank." Then he adds, turning towards his mother, " Let them bring me my finest clothes, my doublet of white ermine, and my pumps of velvet.

I wish to dress up for the angels, and enter Paradise in a becoming manner ! ”

For the third time the priest leans towards the little Dauphin, and speaks to him for a long time in a low voice. . . . In the middle of his discourse the royal child angrily interrupts him : “ But then,” he cries, “ being the Dauphin is nothing at all ! ” And without wishing to hear any more, the little Dauphin turns his face to the wall, and he weeps bitterly.

THE MAGISTRATE IN THE FIELDS

ALPHONSE DAUDET

HIS Worship the Magistrate is on circuit. Coachman in front, lackey behind, the Government barouche carries him majestically to the district meeting of Combe-aux-Fées. For this memorable affair His Worship the Magistrate has put on his fine embroidered coat, his top hat, his tight breeches with silver bands, and his gala sword with a pearl handle. On his knees rests a large portfolio of goffered shagreen, at which he looks sadly.

His Worship the Magistrate looks sadly at his portfolio of goffered shagreen. He thinks of the famous speech which he is about to declaim before the inhabitants of Combe-aux-Fées. . . . "Gentlemen under my jurisdiction . . ." But in vain he twists the blonde silk of his whiskers, and repeats twenty times in sequence. . . . "Gentlemen under my jurisdiction . . ." The rest of the speech will not come.

The rest of the speech will not come. It is so hot in this barouche. As far as eye can see, the road to Combe-aux-Fées shines, dry and dusty, under the southern sun. The air is on fire, and on the elms by the roadside, all covered with white dust, thousands of cicadas answer each other from tree to tree. All of a sudden His Worship the Magistrate gives a start. Below there, at the foot of a hill, he perceives a copse of green oak trees that seems to signal to him.

The copse of green oak trees seems to signal to him: "Do come here, Your Worship the Magistrate, to compose your speech! You will be much better inspired under my trees. . . ." His Worship the Magistrate yields to the seduction. He leaps down from his barouche, and tells his men to wait for him, while he composes his speech beneath the oak trees.

Beneath the oak trees there are violets and sweet grassés and murmuring springs, and birds are singing in the branches. When they see His Worship the Magistrate with his handsome breeches, and his portfolio of goffered shagreen, the birds are afraid and stop singing. The springs do not dare to make any noise, and the violets

hide themselves in the grass. . . . All this little world has never seen a Magistrate before, and they all ask in a low voice, "Who is this fine lord who walks about in silver breeches?"

In a low voice, under the green leaves, they ask themselves, "Who is this fine lord in silver breeches? . . ." Meanwhile, His Worship the Magistrate, delighted with the silence and the coolness of the trees, lifts up the skirts of his coat, puts his top hat on the grass, and sits down on the moss at the foot of a young oak. Then he opens on his knees his great portfolio of goffered shagreen, and draws from it a large sheet of Government paper. "It is an artist!" says the finch. "No," says the bullfinch, "it is not an artist, since he wears silver breeches; it is rather a prince."

"It is rather a prince," says the bullfinch. "Neither an artist nor a prince," interrupts an old nightingale, who once sang for a whole season in the gardens of some Government offices. . . . "I know what it is; it is a Magistrate!" And all the little wood goes whispering, "It is a Magistrate! It is a Magistrate!" "How bald he is!" says the crested lark. The violets ask, "Is it a wicked being?"

"Is it a wicked being?" ask the violets. The old nightingale replies, "Not at all!" And on this assurance, the birds begin again to sing, the springs to flow, the violets to scent the air, as if the gentleman was not there. . . . Impassible in the midst of all this pretty uproar, His Worship the Magistrate invokes in his heart the muse of agricultural associations, and, with pencil raised, begins to declaim in his most ceremonious tones, "Gentlemen under my jurisdiction . . ."

"Gentlemen under my jurisdiction," says the Magistrate in his most ceremonious tones. . . . A burst of laughter interrupts him; he turns round and sees nothing but a big woodpecker, who looks at him with a smile, perched on his top hat. The Magistrate shrugs his shoulders, and tries to continue his speech; but the woodpecker again interrupts him, and cries from the distance, "What is the good of it!" "How! What is the good of it?" says the Magistrate, becoming quite red in the face. And, driving away with a gesture this impudent bird, he continues, "Gentlemen under my jurisdiction . . ."

"Gentlemen under my jurisdiction," the Magistrate says once more. But look! the little violets are rising towards him on the end of their stalks, and saying to him very softly, "Your Worship the

Magistrate ! Can you smell how beautiful we are ? ” And the springs under the moss make a divine music for him ; and in the branches above his head a flock of finches come and sing to him their prettiest airs, and all the little wood conspires to prevent him from composing his speech.

All the little wood conspires to prevent him from composing his speech. His Worship the Magistrate, drunk with perfumes, intoxicated with music, vainly tries to resist the new charm that steals over him. He leans on the grass, unbuttons his fine coat, and stammers still two or three times : “ Gentlemen under my jurisdiction . . . Gentlemen under my juri— . . . Gentlemen und— . . . ” Then he sends everybody under his jurisdiction to the devil, and the muse of agricultural associations has nothing left to do but to veil her face.

Veil thy face, O muse of the agricultural associations ! When, at the end of an hour, the coachman and lackey, anxious about their master, come into the little wood, they see a spectacle that makes them recoil with horror. His Worship the Magistrate is lying on his stomach in the grass, as barely clad as a gipsy. He has taken off his coat, and, while chewing violets, he is composing verses.

AT THE PALAIS DE JUSTICE

ALPHONSE DAUDET

I KNOW not if it be from lack of habit, but I can never enter the Palais de Justice without an uneasiness, an inexplicable heart pang. That grating, those great courts, that stone staircase so vast that every one mounts it in isolation, enveloped in his individual torment. The antiquity of the structures, the melancholy clock, the height of the windows, and also the mist of the quay, that moisture that clings to walls that skirt the water, all give you a foretaste of the neighbouring prison. In the halls the impression is the same, or more vivid still, because of the peculiar company which peoples them, because of those long black robes which make the solemn gestures, because of those who accuse, and the unintelligible records, the eternal records spread out everywhere on the tables, carried under the arms in enormous bundles, overflowing.

There are great green doors, noiseless and mysterious, from whence escape—when they are ajar—gusts of voices severe or weeping, and visions of school benches, platforms black with caps, and great crucifixes leaning forward. Muskets ring out on the flags. Sinister rumblings of carriages pass shaking the arches. All these noises blended together are like a respiration, the panting breath of a factory, the apparatus of justice at work. And hearing this terrible law machine at labour, one desires to shrink within himself, to dwindle for fear of being caught, even by a hair, in this formidable gearing which one knows to be so complicated, tenacious, destructive.

I was thinking of this the other morning, in going to see an examining magistrate before whom I had, in behalf of a poor devil, to recommend a stay of proceedings. The hall of witnesses, where I was waiting, was full of people, sheriff's officers, clerks engrossing behind a glass partition, witnesses whispering to each other in advance of their depositions, women of the people, impressive and garrulous, who were telling the officers their entire lives in order to arrive at the affair that had brought them there. Near me an open door lit the sombre

lobby of the examining magistrate, a lobby which leads everywhere, even to the scaffold, and from which the prisoners issue as accused. Some of these unfortunates, brought there under a strong escort by way of the staircase of la Conciergerie, lay about on the benches awaiting their turn to be interrogated, and it is in this ante-chamber of the convict prison that I overheard a lovers' dialogue, an idyl of the faubourg, as impassioned as Theocritus' poem, but more heartbreaking—Yes, in the midst of this shadow, where so many criminals have left something of their shuddering, of their hopes, and of their rages, I saw two beings love, and smile ; and however lowly was this love, however faded was this smile, the old lobby must have been as astonished by it as would a miry and black street of Paris, if penetrated by the cooing of a turtle-dove.

In a listless attitude, almost unconscious, a young girl was seated at the end of a bench, quiet as a working woman who waits the price of her day's labour. She wore the calico bonnet and the sad costume of Saint Lazare with an air of repose and of well-being, as though the prison régime were the best thing she had found in all her life. The guard, who sat beside her, seemed to find her much to his taste, and they laughed together softly. At the other end of the lobby, wholly in the shadow, was seated, handcuffs on wrists, the lover of this girl. She had not seen him at first ; but as soon as her eyes became accustomed to the darkness, she perceived him and trembled : " Why, that's Pignou—Hé ! Pignou ! "

The guard silenced her. Prisoners are expressly forbidden to talk to each other.

" Oh ! I beg of you, only one word ! " she said, leaning far forward toward the remotest part of the lobby.

But the soldier remained inflexible. " No—no—it can't be done—only if you have some message to give him, tell it to me, I will repeat it to him."

Then a dialogue was entered into between this girl and her Pignou, with the guard as interpreter.

Much moved, without heeding those about her, she began :

" Tell him I have never loved any one but him ; that I will never love another in all my life."

The guard made a number of steps in the lobby, and redoubling his gravity as though to take from the proceeding all that was too

kindly, he repeated : " She says she has never loved but you, and that she'll never love another."

I heard a grumbling, a confused stammering which must have been the response of Pignou, then the guard went back with measured step toward the bench.

" What did he say ? " demanded the child all anxious, and as though waiting were too long : " Well, tell me what he said now ! "

" He said he was very miserable ! "

Then, carried away by her emotion and the custom of the noisy and communicative streets, she cried out loud :

" Don't be weary, my friend—the good days will come again ! "

And in this voice, still young, there was something piteous, almost maternal. Plainly this was the woman of the people with her courage under affliction and her dog-like devotion.

From the depths of the lobby a voice replied, the voice of Pignou, wine-soaked, torn, burned with alcohol :

" Go on ! the good days—I'll have them at the end of my five years ! "

He knew his case well, that one !

The guards cried : " Hush !—Keep quiet ! " But too late.

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A door had opened, and the examining magistrate himself appeared on the sill.

Skull-cap of velvet, grizzled whiskers, mouth thin and evil, the eye scrutinising, distrustful, but not profound, it was just the type of an examining magistrate, one of those men who thinks he has a criminal before him always, like those doctors of the insane who see maniacs everywhere. That one in particular had a certain way of looking at you, so annoying, and so insulting, that you felt guilty without having done anything. With one glance of the eye he terrified all the lobby : " What does all this noise mean ? Try to do your duty a little better," he said, addressing the guards. Then he closed his door with a sharp click.

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The municipal guard taken to task, red, mortified, looked around a moment for some one upon whom to lay the blame. But the little girl said nothing more, Pignou sat quiet on his bench. All at once he perceived me, and as I was at the door of the hall, almost in the lobby, he took me by the arm and jerked me around brutally.

" What are you doing there, you ? "

THE BENEFICENT GOD OF CHEMILLÉ

ALPHONSE DAUDET

THE priest of Chemillé had to carry the Holy Sacrament to a sick man.

It was very sad that any one should die on such a lovely summer's day, and just at noon too, when everything was life and light.

It was also very sad that the poor priest should be obliged to start directly after dinner, at the very time he was in the habit, breviary in hand, of taking a bit of a nap under the shade of his arbour, in the fresh air and repose of a pretty garden full of ripe peaches and hollyhocks.

"For Thy sake, O Lord!" thought the holy man, with a sigh; and, mounted on a grey ass, with the holy crucifix in front of him across the saddle, he followed the narrow pathway made half-way up the hill side between red rock, covered with flowering mosses, and the stony slope and tall brushwood stretching down to the plain.

The ass, likewise, the poor ass sighed, "For Thy sake, O Lord!" after his fashion, lifting up now one ear, now the other, to keep off the flies that were tormenting him.

How wicked and worrying those noontide flies are! and added to that there was the hill to go up and the priest of Chemillé to carry—no light weight, especially after a meal.

Occasionally peasants passed by, and the priest returned their greeting on the part of the holy cross without exactly knowing what he was doing, for his head began to be heavy with sleep.

Past Villandry, where the rock becomes higher and the steep path narrower, the priest of Chemillé was rudely awakened from his slumbers by the "Hoi! hoi!" of a waggoner coming towards him. The cart was heavily laden with hay, and leaned to the side at every turn of the wheel.

It was a critical moment. Even by crouching as close as possible to the rock, there was not room for two abreast in the path. Go down again to the high road? The priest could not do it. He had taken this short cut for the sake of speed, knowing his sick man to be at the

last extremity. He tried to explain this to the waggoner, but the rustic refused to listen.

"I'm sorry, sir," he said, without removing his pipe from his mouth, "but it's too hot for me to return to Azay by the side-path. But for you, jogging along quietly on your ass, it's all right."

"But, wretched man, don't you see what I've got here, the holy crucifix, the Beneficent God of Chemillé, you bad Christian you, that I'm taking to a dying man."

"I belong to Villandry," retorted the waggoner, "and have nothing to do with the God of Chemillé. Hoi ! hoi !" and the heathen whipped up his horse at the risk of sending the ass and all upon it rolling down to the foot of the hill.

Our priest was not exactly patient. "Ah ! that's it, is it ? Very well, wait a moment," and dismounting, he carefully placed the holy crucifix on a bed of wild thyme.

Then the holy man fell on his knees, and offered up this short prayer : "Beneficent God of Chemillé, thou seest what has happened, and how I am forced to bring this recreant to his senses. And I can do it without assistance from any one, for I have strong fists and right on my side. Stay quietly there, look on at the fight, and be neither for nor against. I shall soon settle his business."

The prayer ended, he got up, and began turning up his sleeves. Then above his hands, his beautiful priestly hands, soft and smooth with many benedictions, there appeared two baker's wrists firm and strong as knots of ash.

Crash ! crash ! At the first blow the waggoner's pipe was broken between his teeth, at the second he found himself lying at the bottom of the ditch, humiliated, bruised, motionless.

Then the priest dragged the waggon back, and very carefully placed it along the slope with the horse's head in the shade of a mulberry-tree. He proceeded at a brisk trot to his sick man, whom he found sitting up under his chintz bed-curtains, recovered from his fever as if by a miracle, and in the act of uncorking an old bottle of sparkling Vouvray in order to celebrate his return to life. I leave you to guess whether our priest assisted in the operation.

From that time the Beneficent God of Chemillé has been very popular in Touraine, and it is he that the good people of that place invoke in all their quarrels, saying : "O Beneficent God of Chemillé, be neither for nor against !"

THE BENEFICENT GOD OF CHEMILLÉ 423

He is the true God of Battles, who favours nobody and lets each triumph according to his strength and right. So, when the day dawns—you know, my friends, what I mean—we must not address our prayers to the sanguinary friend of Augusta and Wilhelm who is to be won over by *Te Deums* and masses set to music. No! we must not pray to the Lord God of Sabaoth, but to the Beneficent God of Chemillé. And this is what we shall say to him :

PRAYER

“ Beneficent God of Chemillé, the French are praying to thee. Thou knowest what those people over there have done to us. Now the day of vengeance has come. To take it we need no help from any one, having, this time, good guns, buttons on all our gaiters, and right on our side. Remain then at thy ease and watch our battles and be neither for nor against us. The business of those beggars will soon be settled. So be it ! ”

ÉMILE ZOLA

1840-1902

THE SHOULDERS OF THE MARQUISE

I

THE Marquise is sleeping in her big bed, beneath large curtains of yellow satin. At noon, at the clear chime of the clock, she decides to open her eyes. The chamber is warm. The carpets, hangings, doors and windows make it a soft, delightful nest, where the cold does not enter. Perfumes and warm airs float about. Here eternal springtime prevails.

As soon as she is well awake, the Marquise seems to be seized by a sudden anxiety. Throwing back the counterpane, she rings for Julie.

"Did Madame ring?"

"Say, is it thawing?"

Oh, the good Marquise! With what a troubled voice she asks this question! Her first thought is for this terrible frost, this keen north wind that she does not feel herself, but which must blow so cruelly into the hovels of the poor. And she asks if the heavens have been pitiful, if she can warm herself without remorse, without thinking of all those who are shivering outside.

"Has it thawed, Julie?"

Her maid brings her her morning dressing-gown, which has been warmed before the big fire.

"Oh, no, Madame! It is not thawing. On the contrary, it is freezing harder. A man has just been found frozen to death on an omnibus."

The Marquise is possessed by a childish joy: she claps her hands.

"Ah! so much the better. I shall be able to skate this afternoon," she says.

II

Julie draws the curtain softly, so that no sudden brightness should hurt the tender eyes of the delicious Marquise. The bluish reflection of the snow fills the room with a blithe radiance. The sky is grey, but such a pretty tint of grey that it reminds the Marquise of the gown of

pearl-grey silk she wore last night at the Ministerial ball. This gown was trimmed with white lace, similar to the network of snow she sees on the edge of the roofs, against the paleness of the sky.

Last night she was charming with her new diamonds. She went to bed at five o'clock : so her head is still somewhat heavy. However, she has sat down before a mirror, and Julie has lifted up the blonde waves of her hair. The dressing-gown slips : her shoulders remain bare down to the middle of her back. Quite a generation has grown old enjoying the spectacle of the shoulders of the Marquise. Since, thanks to a strong Government, ladies with a joyous nature can uncover their necks and dance at the Tuileries, she has carried her shoulders through the rout of the official drawing-rooms with an assiduity that has made her the living sign-board of the charms of the Second Empire. It has been necessary for her to follow the fashion and cut down her gowns, now as far as the small of her back, now as far as the points of her bosom ; so that the dear woman has, dimple by dimple, unveiled all the treasures of her bust. The shoulders of the Marquise, largely displayed, are the blazon of the reign of the Third Napoleon.

III

It is useless to describe the shoulders of the Marquise. They are as popular as the Pont Neuf. For eighteen years they have been part of the public spectacles. You need only to perceive the slightest tip of them, in a drawing-room, at the theatre or elsewhere, to exclaim : "Look ! the Marquise ! I recognise the dark mole on her left shoulder !" Moreover, they are very lovely shoulders, white, plump, enticing. The glances of a Government have passed over them, giving them more fineness, like those paving-stones that the feet of the crowd polish in the course of time. If I were the husband or the lover, I would prefer to go and kiss the crystal door-handle of a Minister's study, worn by the hands of solicitors of favour, rather than touch with my lips these shoulders over which has passed the warm breath of all the gallantry of Paris. When you think of the thousand desires that have trembled above them, you ask yourself of what clay must nature have moulded them that they are not as corroded and crumbled as those nudities of statues, exposed to the open air of gardens, and with all their contours eaten away by the winds.

The Marquise has put her modesty elsewhere, and made her shoulders

an institution. And how she has fought for the Government of her choice! Always in the breach, everywhere at once, at the Tuileries, with the Ministers, in the embassies, among the simple millionaires, rallying the hesitators with smiles, supporting the throne with her alabaster breast, displaying in days of peril the little hidden delicious corners, more persuasive than the arguments of orators, more decisive than the swords of soldiers, and threatening, in order to win a vote, to cut down her under-linen until the wildest members of the Opposition admit they have been convinced! Always the shoulders of the Marquise have remained whole and victorious. They have borne up a world, without a single wrinkle appearing on their marble whiteness.

IV

This afternoon, on coming from the hands of Julie, the Marquise, clad in a delicious Polish costume, has gone skating. She skates adorably. At the Bois it was cold enough to freeze a wolf. The north wind stung the lips and noses of the ladies, just as if sharp sand were being blown in their faces. The Marquise laughed: it amused her to feel cold. Now and then she went to warm her feet at the braziers, lighted on the edge of the little lake. Then she returned in the icy air, spinning away like a swallow that skims the ground.

Ah, what an enjoyable afternoon! And how lucky it is that the thaw has not yet set in! The Marquise will be able to skate all the week.

In coming home the Marquise saw in a by-way of the Champs Élysées a poor woman, shivering at the foot of a tree, half dead with cold.

"The unhappy creature!" she murmured, in a sorry voice.

And as the carriage was going too quick, the Marquise, not being able to find her purse, threw her bouquet to the beggar-woman, a bouquet of white lilac well worth a hundred francs.

THE PARADISE OF CATS

EMILE ZOLA

AN aunt has left me an Angora cat that is really the stupidest beast I know. This is what my cat told me, one winter evening, before the fire:

I

I was then two years old, and I was the plumpest and most simple cat ever seen. At this tender age I showed all the presumption of an animal that scorns the sweetnesses of home life. And yet what gratitude I owed to Providence for having placed me with your aunt! The worthy woman adored me. I had, in the depths of a cupboard, a veritable bedroom—feather cushion and a triple coverlet! The food was equal to the room. Never bread, never soup, nothing but meat, good red meat.

And well! in the midst of all this luxury, I had only one desire, one dream—to slip through the open window and run away on the roofs. Caressing was without pleasure to me, the softness of my bed nauseated me, and my fatness sickened me. I was bored all day long through being happy. I must tell you that, in stretching out my neck, I had seen from the window the opposite roof. Four cats that day were fighting there, their fur bristling, their tails up, rolling on the blue slates in the broad sunlight, swearing with joy. Never had I contemplated a sight so extraordinary. Henceforward my beliefs were fixed. True happiness was upon that roof, behind the window they shut so carefully. I remembered as proof of this that they just as carefully shut the cupboards in which meat was hidden.

I drew up a plan of flight. There must be in life something else than red meat. There was the unknown, the ideal. One day they forgot to shut the kitchen window. I jumped on a little roof just below it.

II

How fine the roofs were! Large gutters edged them, giving forth delicious smells. I followed joyfully these gutters, where my paws

sunk in a fine mud that had an inexpressible sweetness and warmth. It seemed to me I was walking on velvet. And the sun gave a good heat, a heat that melted my fat.

I shall not conceal from you that I trembled in all my limbs. There was terror in my joy. I especially recollect a frightful feeling that almost made me tumble on the pavement. Three cats, who rolled from the top of a house, came up to me caterwauling hideously. And as I almost fainted with fear, they treated me as an utter fool, and said they had only mewed in fun. I began to mew with them. It was charming. The jolly fellows had not my stupid fat. They jeered at me when I slid like a ball on the plates of zinc, warmed by the strong sun. An old tom-cat of the merry band became very friendly with me. He offered to complete my education, and I accepted his good offices with gratitude.

Ah, how far off was the cosiness of your aunt ! I drank from the gutters, and never had sugared milk seemed so sweet ! Everything appeared to me good and fine. A she-cat passed, a ravishing she-cat, and the sight of her filled me with an unknown emotion. Only in dreams alone, up to then, had I seen these exquisite creatures, with spines of adorable suppleness. We rushed to greet the newcomer, my three companions and myself. I raced ahead of the others, and was about to pay my compliments to the delightful beauty, when one of my comrades bit me in the neck. I gave a cry of pain.

"Bah !" said the old tom-cat to me, dragging me off. "We shall see plenty of others !"

III

After a ramble of an hour I had a ferocious appetite.

"What is there to eat on the housetops ?" I asked my friend.

"What you find," he replied sagely.

This answer troubled me, for though I searched well I found nothing. At last I saw a young working-woman in a garret, preparing her lunch. On the table below the window was a fine cutlet of an appetising redness. "Here is your affair !" I said to myself in all simplicity. And I leaped on the table and seized the cutlet. But the woman, having seen me, struck me on the spine a terrible blow with a broom. I dropped the meat and fled, giving a terrified oath.

"Why do you go outside your own village ?" said the tom-cat.

"Meat that is placed on a table is meant to be desired afar. You must search in the gutters."

Never could I understand that meat in kitchens did not belong to cats. My stomach began to worry me seriously. The tom-cat completely made me despair by saying that we should have to wait till night. Then we should go down to the streets and ransack the rubbish heaps. Wait till the night! He said that tranquilly, like a hardened philosopher. I—I felt ready to faint at the mere thought of this prolonged fast.

IV

Night slowly came, a night of drizzle that chilled me. Then the rain soon fell, sharp, penetrating, whipped by sudden gusts of wind. We descended by the skylight of a staircase. How ugly the street seemed to me! There was no more of the warm sunlight, the large sun, the roofs white with radiance, where you could bask so delightfully. My paws slid over the greasy pavement. I recollected with bitterness my triple coverlet and my feather cushion.

Scarcely had we reached the street than my friend the big tom-cat began to tremble. He hunched himself up, small, very small, and shot stealthily along the houses, telling me to follow him quickly. As soon as he found a coach door, he hastily hid there, with a purr of satisfaction. I asked him what was the reason for our flight.

"Did you see that man with a basket and a hooked stick?" he said.

"Yes."

"Well! if he had seen us he would have knocked us on the head, and eaten us roasted!"

"Eaten us roasted!" I cried. "Then the street does not belong to us? We do not eat, and yet we are eaten!"

V

However, people had emptied their rubbish before their doors. I ransacked the heaps with despair. I found two or three small, meatless bones that had been dragged through the cinders. It was then I understood how succulent are fresh liver and lights! My friend the tom-cat scratched over the rubbish like a craftsman. He kept me on the run till the morning, visiting each pavement, and never hurrying.

For nearly ten hours I was in the rain ; I shivered all over. "Accursed streets, accursed freedom ! Oh, how I longed for my prison !

At dawn, the tom-cat, seeing I staggered :

" You have had enough ? " he asked, with a strange look.

" Yes," I replied.

" Would you like to go home ? "

" Certainly. But how can I find the house ? "

" Come with me. Seeing a fat cat like you coming out this morning, I felt sure you were not made for the harsh joys of liberty. I know your lodging. I will take you to the door."

He said it quite simply, the worthy fellow. When we arrived :

" Good-bye ! " he said, without the least show of emotion.

" No ! " I cried. " We cannot leave like this. You must come with me. We will share the same bed and the same meat. My mistress is a good woman . . . "

He did not let me finish.

" Be quiet ! " he said sharply. " You are a fool. I should die amid your feather cushions. Your way of life is good enough for mongrel cats. Free cats would never buy your bed and meat at the price of a prison. Good-bye ! "

And he scrambled back on the roofs. I saw his great, lean silhouette shivering with pleasure in the light of the rising sun. When I entered, your aunt took the whip and gave me a beating that I received with deep joy. I relished the pleasure of being warm and beaten. While she struck me, I thought of the delights of the meat she would presently give me.

You see, concluded my cat, stretching himself out before the flames, true happiness, paradise, my dear master, is to be shut up and beaten in a room where meat is.

I speak for the cats.

THE LEGEND OF LITTLE BLUE RIDING-HOOD

ÉMILE ZOLA

I

SHE was born, the lovely girl with red hair, one December morning, as the snow fell slow and virginal. There were certain signs in the air that announced the mission of love she had come to fulfil : the sun shone rosy upon the white snow, and over the roof there floated the scent of lilac and the song of bird, as in springtime. She came into the world in the depths of a hovel, no doubt by humility, in order to show that she wished only for the riches of the heart. She had no family ; so she could love the whole of mankind, having arms supple enough to embrace the world. As soon as she had reached the age of love, she left the shadow, where she had been meditating, and began to walk the roads, seeking for starved hearts that she satisfied with her glances.

She was a tall, strong girl with black eyes and red mouth. Her flesh was of a dead pallor, covered with a light down that made her skin a white velvet. When she walked, her body undulated in a tender rhythm. Besides, on leaving the straw in which she was born, she understood that it comported with her mission to clothe herself in silk and lace. Here she was inspired by her white teeth and her rose-coloured cheeks ; she knew how to find necklaces of pearl, white as her teeth, and petticoats of satin as rosy as her cheeks. When she was fully adorned, it was good to meet her on a path on a clear morning of May. Her heart and her lips were open to all comers. When she found a beggar on the edge of a ditch she questioned him with a smile : if he complained of burnings and fevers at the heart, she gave him alms at once from her mouth, and the misery of the beggar was assuaged.

All the poor of the parish knew her. They crowded to her door, awaiting the distribution. She came down morning and evening, dividing her treasures of love, serving to each his part. She was as good and as sweet as white bread, and the beggars called her Little Blue Riding-Hood of Love.

II

Now it happened that a terrible plague desolated the country. All the young men were struck down by it, and the greater number were dying. The symptoms of the malady were terrifying. The heart ceased to beat, the head grew empty, the dying man became stupefied. Young fellows, resembling ridiculous dancing puppets, walked about sneering, buying hearts at the fairs, as children buy sticks of barley-sugar. When the plague attacked good honest lads, the disease was manifested in a black melancholy, a mortal despair. Artists wept, powerless, before their works ; lovers went and threw themselves in rivers.

You can imagine that the beautiful child knew how to play her part in this sombre event. She established ambulances, she tended the sick night and day, using her lips to close their wounds, and thanking heaven for the great task that had been given her. She was a Providence for the young unfortunates. She saved a great number of them. Those whose hearts she could not cure were those who no longer had any heart. Her treatment was simple : she gave the sick men her helpful hand and her warm breath. Never did she ask a recompense. She ruined herself cheerfully, giving alms without a thought. So the misers of the time shook their heads when they saw the young spendthrift disperse in this way the great fortune of her graces. They said to one another :

“ She will die on the straw. She gives her heart’s blood away without ever weighing the drops.”

III

Indeed, one day as she searched her heart, she found it empty. She had a shudder of terror ; there scarcely remained to her a few grains of love. And the plague was still raging.

The girl revolted, thinking no longer of the immense fortune she had dissipated, feeling the need of poignant charity that made her poverty harder to bear. It was so sweet, in warm sunny weather, to go in quest of beggars ; so sweet to love and be loved ! And now, she was obliged to dwell in the shadow, waiting in her turn for alms that perhaps would never come. For a moment she entertained the wise resolution to guard precious the little that still remained to her, and

spend it with great care. But she grew so cold in her lonely retreat that she ended by coming out and searching for the sunshine of spring.

On her way, at the first boundary stone, she met a young man whose heart was evidently dying of inanition. At this sight her ardent charity awoke. She could not belie her mission. And radiant with goodness, and rising higher in her abnegation, she put all the rest of her heart on her lips, and bending down sweetly, she kissed the young man saying, "There is my last gift. Give me back all you can spare me."

The young man returned her all he could. That evening she sent a letter to her circle of poor, telling them that she was obliged to suspend her alms. There was left to the dear girl just enough to live on in honest ease, with the last hungry creature she had succoured.

This legend of the Little Blue Riding-Hood of Love has no moral.

